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RESTORATION OF ALL MEN.

PROVED,

BY

SCRIPTURE, REASON,

AND

COMMON SENSE.

BY JOSEPH YOUNG, M.D.

The times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. Acts iii. 21.

NEW-YORK,
PUBLISHED BY S. CAMPBELL.

1804.

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AN ATTEMPT TO INVESTIGATE AND DISCLOSE THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF THEOLOGY, UPON WHICH ALL TRUE RELIGION IS FOUNDED.

.....

Say first of God above, or man below,
What can we reason but from what we know?

.....

The first principles of Theology consist in believing that there is one eternal, immutable, omnipresent God, the creator, preserver, and governor of the Universe, who is an uncreated, self-existent, independent spirit; whose glorious attributes are infinite goodness, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, mercy, and truth.

As all these attributes are infinite, they cannot possibly admit any thing in the nature, or disposition of the Deity, contrary to them; on which account, they become an infallible *standard*, to which all controverted opinions in Theology should be brought and tested. For every opinion that is contrary to any of these glorious attributes must be false, and should be discarded, as being derogatory to the moral character of God, and greatly injurious to man-

kind. As we depend upon God for our very existence, with every comfort and blessing which we enjoy, it is of infinite importance to us, to know his true character and real disposition towards us: for which purpose let us take this infallible standard for our guide, and humbly enquire, for what purpose, and with what designation, did the Deity create us? If he is infinitely good, he certainly *wished* and *designed* finally to fix us in a permanent state of *happiness*. If infinitely *wise*, he has certainly laid his *plan* so as to prevent the possibility of being disappointed or *frustrated*.

And if he is infinitely *powerful*, no union or combination of the powers of all created beings could possibly prevent the fulfilment of his most gracious purpose.

To affirm that when God created us he did not *wish* or design to bring us finally into a state of permanent happiness, is positively to deny his infinite *goodness* and *benignity*.

To affirm that he formed a *plan* which he could not execute agreeably to his *will*, or original design, is denying his claim to infinite *wisdom*.

To acknowledge the benevolence of the *design*, and the *wisdom* of the *plan*, and at the same time to deny that the Deity was possessed of sufficient *power* to execute it, is an absurdity too glaring for belief or serious refutation. And yet all those who believe in the doctrine of eternal punishment in hell, cannot, at the same time, believe in the infinite goodness, wisdom and power of God.

We are told in Genesis, that when God had finished the work of creation, that he pronounced all the things which he had made to be very good, and in consequence he must have loved every thing which he had made, because it was good. And if he is an unchangeable being, the same yesterday, to day, and forever, whatever he *once loved*, he will still continue to love, otherwise he would be mutable. If it should be said that God loved mankind as long as they continued to be good and innocent, and began to hate them when they became sinners, what, then, are we to believe with respect to his omniscience? Were not every action of our future lives as if present in his sight? If so, he must have loved and hated us infinitely at the same time, or he must have loved us infinitely at one time, and hated us infinitely at another: for all his attributes are infinite, and it is impos-

sible that the Deity should be infinitely good and kind, and infinitely cruel and implacable.

We have abundant evidence from scripture, reason, and experience, to convince us that God has loved us, does love us now, and will continue to love us forever. We therefore conclude that he will not sentence any soul which he has loved, and continues to love, to hell, to suffer eternal torments. We are also informed in Genesis, that God made man in his own likeness, and man has very courteously returned the compliment by attributing to the Deity the greatest number of our revengeful vindictive passions; and insinuates that he exercises these vindictive passions in a degree far exceeding in cruelty any thing that has been known amongst men. The custom of torturing criminals has been discarded in every civilized country; but what are temporary tortures (of even the most savage invention) either in *severity* or *duration*, when compared with those which many suppose God will inflict upon the souls which he has made. This is certainly not the true character of our heavenly Father; but if any sincere enquirer should wish to know the real character of the Father, and the Son, they will find both perfectly delineated by Christ himself, in the 15th chapter of Luke. He first gives his own charac-

ter in the parable of the lost sheep. Although he is represented in the parable to have an hundred sheep, he is not willing to *lose one* which had strayed; but leaving the ninety and nine in the wilderness, he determines to search for that which was lost, until he find it. He does not wait until the poor, silly, stray sheep can discover its way back, and return of its own accord to the fold, but searches until he finds it; and instead of beating it severely for having gone astray, he lays it on his shoulders and returns home rejoicing, and calls upon his friends his to rejoice with him, because he had found sheep which was lost. He concludes by telling the Scribes and Pharisees (who murmured because he received sinners) that there would be joy in Heaven over one sinner that repented, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance. He also gives the genuine character of his Father in the parable of the prodigal son. The youngest son, probably impatient of restraint, and wishing to exercise the freedom of his own will, solicited his Father to give him his proportion of the goods, which his Father might allot to him; and not many days after, the Father divided his property between his two sons; the youngest collected his share together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance in

riotous living, and was reduced to the sordid condition of a swine herd, and reduced by famine to the most extreme degree. In these deplorable circumstances, he resolves to return to his Father, confess his guilt, and implore his pardon; but probably entertaining the same opinion of his father's disposition, which is but too generally harboured at the present day, he laboured under the most distressing apprehensions that he would not receive him as a son, but determined to petition to be received as a servant; but how agreeably must he have been surprized, when, instead of meeting an angry, resentful Father at home, to load him with the most bitter reproaches for his licentious conduct, his indulgent parent meets him on the way, embraces him in the most affectionate manner, orders his servants to bring forth the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: he orders the fatted calf to be killed, to make a feast and rejoice, because his son that was dead is now alive again, was lost, and is found.

This is the genuine character of the merciful Father of mankind delineated by Christ himself, and also a description of the means by which he reforms his prodigal children, to teach them by experience, that the paths of *vice*

necessarily lead to the habitations of *misery*, and those of *virtue* to permanent *happiness*. But we discover in these benevolent characters nothing of that vindictive spirit which has been but too generally ascribed to the Deity: whereas it appears that all he requires of us is evidently for our own good....not for his: for we can do nothing by which he can be benefited; for when we have done all, we are but unprofitable servants. It also exhibits, in the character of the eldest son, the disposition of many pious people at this day, who cannot brook the idea that any person should be accepted by our heavenly Father, that is not as righteous as themselves. They have served God by praying in their families every night and morning, and have gone to church twice or three times every Sunday for many years, while these vagabonds were haunting taverns and houses of ill fame. And shall they now be placed on the same footing with us? Shall they who came into the field at the eleventh hour receive as much wages as we, who have borne the heat of the day?

But pray, Messieurs Notables, be honest, and re-examine your motives. Were your boasted services performed out of pure love to God, or were they not evidently to serve yourselves, to recommend you to God, and make him your

debtor for services performed? Although we cannot merit salvation by the performance of these duties, they should not be neglected. But there is a way in which we can render services pleasing to God, and of essential advantage to ourselves and to mankind.

When God created mankind, it is demonstrably evident that he intended to bring every individual of the human race into a state of permanent happiness; as I shall endeavour to prove in the course of this work. It is therefore our duty, and also our interest, to co-operate with the Deity and all good beings, to promote the order, peace and happiness of every individual or society, of which we may become members, as far as God may have enabled us to perform this pleasing and necessary duty.—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment."*

* 1 John iii. 16, 17, 23.

"A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another, as I have loved you, that ye also love one another."* "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. In the Lord *shall all the seed of Israel be justified*, and shall glory."†

By the laws of nature which are founded upon, and have their root and sanction in, the immutable attributes of God, there is an eternal, essential, and immutable difference between right and wrong; good and evil; virtue and vice.... and as their nature and properties are diametrically opposite, so are their tendencies. *Virtue* is naturally and necessarily productive of order, peace, and happiness; and *vice* as naturally conducts its votaries to *discord*, *confusion*, and *misery*. Now as virtue and happiness are evidently preferable to vice and misery, every rational being, from the highest in the scale of existence to the lowest, are under the most indissoluble obligations to promote virtue and happiness, and to obviate, banish, and annihilate

* John xiii. 34. † Isaiah xlv. 22, 23, 25.

vice and *misery* out of the creation of God, in such ways, and by such means, as he in his infinite wisdom may see fit to direct or employ for this purpose: and this obligation (which is incumbent upon all) is enhanced in proportion to their grade in the scale of existence, and their ability to perform the necessary and pleasing duties which are conducive to this important end.

Upon these principles, and for these important reasons, Christ became the appropriate Saviour of the world; as he was the being most *strongly obligated*, and the only one perfectly qualified to destroy *vice* and *misery* (which are emphatically termed the works of the devil) and to purify, cleanse, and restore the whole human race to virtue, peace, and permanent happiness; which was the original and immutable design of our heavenly Father.

If Christ (agreeably to the eternal, immutable laws of nature) was not *legally bound* to regard the happiness or misery of the human race, how could he *justly* and *legally* be "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities?"* If the world of mankind had been fur-

* Isaiah liii. 5.

nished with and had retained sufficient powers to have wrought out their own salvation, the mission of Christ would have been needless.— "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."* "I do not frustrate the grace of God, for if righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain."†

But as we, like sheep, had all gone astray, the benevolent parent of the human race so loved the world, that he sent his dearly beloved Son into it, invested with plenipotentiary power to be Saviour of the world; and also with an ample commission, and celestial authority, to destroy the works of the devil.‡ "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the *works* of the *devil*."§ What? all his works! Yes, verily, both root and branch. And what is still better, even the devil himself shall be destroyed. "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also, himself, likewise took part of the same,

* Gal. ii. 16. † Gal. ii. 21. ‡ Isaiah liii. 6. and 1 John iv. 14. § 1 John iii. 8.

that through death he might *destroy* him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil."*

As the commission of Christ appears to be not only very ample, but of a very important nature, let us enquire into the extent of the first grant or power contained in it, with respect to its limits. See Psalm ii. 7, 8. "I will declare the decree, the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

In consequence of this grant, which is only limited by the bounds of the earth, we are told, 1 John iv. 14. "And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the *Saviour* of the world." Does John mean that Christ is the Saviour of every individual human being? Yes, every one: and this does not depend upon the goodness, wisdom, or power of the creature, but on that of our infinitely merciful Creator: "Who will have *all men* to be *saved* and come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who

* Heb. ii. 14.

gave himself a *ransom for all*, to be testified in due time."* And that this precious ransom was not given in vain, shall be testified in such a solemn and public manner, as to convince every rational being of its efficacy; when they shall hear and see every creature which is in Heaven, on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, saying, "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the lamb for ever."†, Calvinists say, we must observe that he does not mention those which are in hell. It is true, he does not, for this good reason: John knew that there would be no human beings there; because "God had been in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their sins."‡ "And Jesus the lamb of God, who taketh or beareth away the *sin* of the world,"|| will have compleated his work previous to the time of which John was speaking. "For we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the *Saviour* of the world."** "And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the *propitiation* for our *sins*, and not for *ours only*, but for the sins of the whole

* 1 Timothy ii. 4, 5, 6. † Rev. v. 13. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 19. || John i. 29. ** John iv. 42.

world."* "For the grace of God which bringeth salvation to *all men*, hath appeared. Who gave himself for us, that he might *redeem us* from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."† Christ assumed the human nature that he might be as fully and compleatly the *head* and *representative* of *every man*, as Adam was, or had been, so that every man will be as fully and compleatly *justified* and made a partaker of the benefits resulting from the perfect *righteousness* of Christ, his present *head*, as he was brought into *judgment* and *condemnation* by the *offence of Adam*.‡ "Therefore, as by the *offence of one*, judgment came upon *all men* to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of *one*, the *free gift* came upon *all men* unto justification of life."||

Being justified by his grace, through the redemption of Christ Jesus. Whom God hath foreordained to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness [not ours] for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. I declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might

* 1 John ii. 1, 2. † Titus ii. 11, 14. ‡ 1 Cor. xi. 3. || Rom. v. 18.

be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

Christ has engaged to save us from both the curse and condemnation of the law, by submitting him to be made a curse for us.† Having forgiven *all trespasses*, blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and he took it out of the way, nailing to his cross.‡ This sacrifice, and the salutary effects of it to *all mankind*, he predicted, saying, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will *draw all men* unto me. This he said signifying what death he should die."‖ For this important service "God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow of things in Heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. For it is God which worketh in you, both to *will* and to *do* his good pleasure."** It is evident both from scripture and reason, that the present, as well as the future happiness of every created being, depends entirely on the goodness, wisdom, and Almighty power

* Rom. iii. 24, 25, 26. † Gal. iii. 13. ‡ Colos. ii. 13, 14. ‖ John xii. 32, 33. ** Phil. ii. 9, 10, 13.

of God, our merciful Creator; for even Christ himself declares twice in the fifth chapter of the gospel of John, that he of himself could do nothing.* And Christ tells us, I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing. "Therefore, let no man glory in men, for all things are yours. Whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's!"†

On this glorious chain, which reaches from feeble man to his omnipotent Creator, depends all our hopes of future happiness, and not on our own self-righteousness. For this reason we are told, "That no flesh should glory in his presence: but of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us *wisdom* and *righteousness*, and *sanctification* and *redemption*."‡ "But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace ye are saved;) that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding

* John v. 19, and 30. † 1 Cor. iii. 21, 22.
‡ Cor. i. 29, 30.

riches of his grace in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus: for by grace ye are saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Not of works, least any man should boast; for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*

But as there are many who disdain this mendicant scheme of salvation, and scorn to be dependent on free grace alone, let them spin and weave a handsome web of self-righteousness, and appear at the general court of Oyer and Terminer, clad in a decent suit of homespun; for if the Judge should chance to dislike the garb, and order it to be burnt, the wearer must sustain the loss, but the Judge has promised that the owner shall escape, and not be consumed in the fire with the cloths.†

From the passages of scripture which have been quoted, and the observations that have been made, it appears, evidently, that the Father sent his beloved Son to be the *Saviour* of the world.... that he has accepted the appointment, and has actually performed the most arduous part of the

* Ephes. ii. 4, 5, 7, 9, 10. † 1 Cor. iii. 14, 15.

business, having been wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, and thereby became the *propitiation* for the sins of the *whole* world, by which means God was reconciled to the world, and is now in Christ *reconciling* the world to himself, *not imputing* their *sins*; and as it is the will and merciful design of our Father that *all men* should be *saved* and come unto the knowledge of the truth, it is impossible that his purposes should be frustrated. We therefore conclude, that the universal *restitution* of all things, or *salvation* of all men, depends entirely upon the immutable attributes of the Deity, and not on our own works, least any man should boast. Therefore the doctrine of eternal punishment cannot be supported by any other means than by flatly denying the benevolence, wisdom, or power of God: for if he wishes that *all men* may be *saved*, he has certainly wisdom and power sufficient to convince, convert, and reform the most hardened sinner; of which we have had the most ample evidence. To acknowledge this truth, and at the same time to deny that he *wishes all men* to be *saved*, is not only denying his express declaration, but impeaching his infinite goodness and benignity; and more than merely insinuating that he prefers the eternal duration of *vice* and *misery* to

the reign of *virtue* and *happiness*; for it is evident that no power can resist his will.

If this is a good moral character, we will thank our opponents to delineate what they would denominate a bad character, that we may contrast them; that thereby we may discover the extremes of infinite goodness and benignity, and vindictive malevolence and cruelty.

As we have in the first part endeavoured to prove that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour or restorer of the whole world, and not only of a few individuals (as many have believed) let us now proceed to consider the second purpose for which Christ was manifested, to wit, to destroy the works of the devil. But as there are a variety of opinions entertained on this interesting subject, it is in the first place necessary to enquire, and endeavour to ascertain, first, What may with propriety be denominated the *works* of the *devil?*

Secondly, To what extent are they to be destroyed, so as to comport with the gracious design of our heavenly Father?

Thirdly, Whether Christ has sufficient power given to him to fulfil this purpose?

And first, negatively. It cannot be the souls of mankind which Christ was manifested to destroy (as many people have imagined) for these are all the workmanship of God, who declares that he made them for himself. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son. In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins. Who is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things were created *by him* and *for him.*"* If this be true, then it is evident that he created nothing on purpose for the devil. We therefore conclude, that as nothing was created on purpose for the devil, he never will be permitted to hold an everlasting possession of any thing that was not created on purpose for him: and we are confident that a God of infinite *goodness* and *mercy*, whose very essence is *love*, never made one soul on purpose for the devil, and as confident that the devil never can retain one soul contrary to the eternal purpose of our heavenly Father.

* Col. i. 13, 14, 15, 16.

The opinion that the ever-merciful Jehovah should ever have made even one soul, which he positively knew the devil would torment throughout eternal ages, is monstrously absurd and blasphemous, and so derogatory to the moral character of the Deity, that it is fraught with more malignity than the *unpardonable sin* of which the Jews were guilty, by insinuating that Christ was in league with the devil, and saying, "that he cast out devils through Beelzebub the prince of devils."*

But are not those far more criminal who are forced, by the clearest conviction, to acknowledge, that God is possessed of infinite wisdom and almighty power; and could, with the greatest facility, render every individual human being virtuous and happy; but alledge, that he is so devoid of compassion, as to abandon numbers of the souls which he has made, to the permanent dominion of the devil, to be tormented by him throughout eternal ages.

It is revealed as the will of God our Saviour, that all men should be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth;† and that Christ has given himself a *ransom for all*, which will

* Matt. xii. 24. † 1 Tim. ii. 4.

be testified, and acknowledged by all in due time;* and we are confident that he will not leave the *ransomed* in the possession of the enemy.

"Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained *eternal redemption for us.*"† "Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather together, in one, *all things* in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth, even in him."‡

Having proved that the souls of men are not the works of the devil, and consequently that they are not the works which Christ was manifested to destroy, I shall in the next place proceed to prove, that it cannot be actual transgression that is here intended, as no past action can possibly be destroyed or annihilated. A person might, with as much propriety, propose to destroy the darkness of a night which happened a month ago. A transgression may be forgiven, and the record of it blotted out or destroyed;

* 1 Tim. ii. 6. † Heb. ix. 12 ‡ Ephes. i. 9, 10.

but a physical non-entity cannot be destroyed. The works of the devil which the Son of God was manifested to destroy, are evidently the *evil propensities* and vicious habits which mankind have acquired from the evil example of others, and yielding to the temptations which are suited to excite and influence those appetites and passions which were implanted in us by the wise, benevolent author of our being, to answer the most necessary and important purposes, while they are confined within due bounds, and directed to proper ends or objects by the dictates of reason and a well-informed conscience. But being in youth extremely ignorant of the nature of things, and the consequences of our actions, and vast numbers being left without proper instructions respecting their duties to either God or man; thus with appetites and passions in full vigour, and devoid of an adequate degree of reason and experience, are they left to be impelled to action by motives that are aptly suited to gratify these propensities; and being frequently left to the freedom of their own will, but too often follow the evil example of people much older than themselves, they soon learn to copy their foibles, and by degrees begin to practice their vices. Thus ignorance and evil example begets *vicious propensities* and *evil* habits, which naturally and necessarily involve the sin-

ner in confusion and misery, not by the arbitrary infliction of punishment by the Deity, but by the immutable law of nature.

When the prodigal son squandered his finances in riotous living, and had, by his own misconduct, involved himself in misery and distress, what he suffered was not inflicted by the agency of his father, but was the natural consequence of his own profligacy.* It is as impossible that *vice*, by its own inherent qualities, should produce *order*, *peace*, and permanent happiness, as that darkness should produce light, or that tares sown on barren ground should produce a plentiful crop of good wheat. It is impossible that the man who has wasted his estate by gambling, and destroyed his reason by frequent intoxication, should be an happy person, or even permit others, over whom he has any power, to enjoy peace, order, or comfort. Such is the inherent nature of vice and vicious habits. It is therefore evident, that it is these *sinful propensities*, and pernicious *habits*, that the Son of God was manifested to destroy, which are properly denominated the works of the devil, and not the *souls* of mankind. These are the tares, and the chaff, which shall be burned with unquenchable

* Luke xv.

fire, when God shall gather his pure clean wheat into the garner. This is the dross from which the souls of mankind shall be refined, when the Lord shall bring "a third part through the fire, and I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call upon my name, and I will hear them; I will say it is my people, and they shall say, the Lord is my God."*

These are the works that shall be burned, together with self-righteousness, spiritual pride, blind zeal, and the prejudices of an erroneous education, which qualifies each bigot in their own estimation, to judge and condemn others on hearsay evidence, without taking the pains to examine either their own tenets, or those of others, which they condemn.†

But the most formidable device which the devil has ever planed for the destruction of mankind, is, the successful attempt which he has made to traduce the moral character of the Deity. He knows it is impossible that any rational being can be happy while they continue to hate God....he has taken great pains by his emissaries in every nation, to represent the Deity to

* Zech. xiii. 9. † 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14, 15.

be the most cruel, partial, vindictive, inexorable being in existence....insinuating that he has brought millions of souls into being, out of a state of non-existence, in which condition they could neither offend him, nor suffer any inconvenience whatever....positively knowing, and intending, that they should be subjected to the dominion of the devil, and suffer throughout eternal ages the most excruciating torments in a lake of fire which he had prepared for the very purpose, long before they were created.

Opinions similar to these have been assiduously propagated amongst the people of almost every nation; and however they may have differed in their particular dogmas, they have all agreed in representing their Gods to be cruel, partial tyrants, who chose rather to be viewed and worshipped as objects to be dreaded and feared, than loved.

From this fatal misapprehension of the moral character and adorable attributes of the benevolent parent of mankind, originated the horrid practice of parents sacrificing their favourite children to appease the wrath of these dreadful, malignant beings. The Roman Catholic being influenced by the same erroneous opinion of the disposition of the Deity, half starves him-

self, wears an hair cloth next his skin, walks barefooted over the sharpest gravel, and devises many ingenious modes of punishing himself to appease the Deity, as he conceives his vindictive disposition to be, in some measure, gratified and appeased with the misery which he has voluntarily inflicted upon his own body.

The Clergy are perpetually complaining that their parishioners do not love God; but is it not evidently their own fault? Why do they not give the Deity his real character, and exhibit him as he really is, the tender, compassionate parent of the whole human race? and prove it incontestibly by preaching to them now and then, from such texts as the following, viz. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments. If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments. Then will I visit their transgressions with a rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."*

"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses,

* Ps. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32, 33, 44.

he brought them out of darkness, and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder. O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men, for he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder."*

"For I will not contend forever, neither will I be always wroth, for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him. I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners."†

If people were taught in this way, that God loved them, and would still continue to make use of the most effectual means to secure their eternal felicity, they would in time begin to love him, although he might smite them severely, when they considered it as the chastisement of a tender Father, inflicted for their reformation. But when people are once fairly convinced that God is possessed of infinite wisdom and almighty power, and could, with the greatest facility, ren-

* Ps. cvii. 10, 13, 14, 15, 16. † Isaiah lvii. 16, 17, 18.

der every individual human being virtuous and happy, but are told, that he is so devoid of compassion as to abandon numbers of the souls which he has made, to the permanent dominion of the devil, which he *could* have *saved*, but *would not*, it is evident they could not love him while they conceived it to be most probable that they were of the reprobated number; and unless we love God, we cannot be happy either in this life nor in that which is to come.

Love refines the affections, and meliorates the disposition; but fear and dread without love, never added one member to the catalogue of real and genuine saints. It is a passion that cannot be created by fear, but invariably is diminished, if not entirely destroyed by it. It is neither subject to external commands, nor to the most tremendous threats; nor even to the operations of our own will. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and without it the precepts of either the law or the gospel can never be fulfilled: then why has so much pains been taken, and still persisted in, to banish the love of God from the hearts of his creatures, and to implant fear and dread in its place?

What the Clergy have termed preaching the terrors of the law, to drive sinners to Christ for

mercy, has plunged millions into a state of desperation, and has sent many frantic souls prematurely into the world of spirits, exclaiming horribly against the supposed cruelty and partiality of that merciful God who created them, and all mankind, on purpose to confer on them various blessings here, and endless felicity hereafter. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us, *God is love*, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."* Every attribute of the Deity is infinite; it is therefore evident, that he cannot be infinitely benevolent, loving, and kind, and also infinitely vindictive, implacable, and cruel.

But let us now bring this horrid doctrine of *eternal, vindictive punishment* to our theologic standard, by which its enormity will appear.

A God of infinite wisdom and power could convince, convert, and save all the souls which he has made, and also could, with the greatest facility, banish *sin* and *misery* out of the creation;

* 1 John iv. 8, 16, 17, 18.

but it is *asserted* that he never will do either. Does he then prefer the eternal punishment of any of the souls which he has made, and the perpetual duration of *sin* and *misery* to the *virtue* and eternal *felicity* of his creatures; and the total extinction of sin and misery, and evil of every kind and degree? For it is certain, that no combination of created beings can prevent his free choice. We are therefore warranted both by scripture and reason to conclude, that God will finally establish the universal reign of *virtue* and *happiness*, in preference to that of *vice* and *misery*.

Having endeavoured to ascertain what are properly denominated works of the devil, which the Son of God was manifested to destroy, we next proceed to inquire to what extent they are to be destroyed, so as to comport with the gracious designs of our heavenly Father.

Our text informs us that the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, without making an exception for the preservation of any part or portion of them. We therefore conclude, that the Father intended the destruction to be a complete annihilation and eradication of all his works, every vestige of depravity in the souls of every human being, and

every degree of *misery*, and in consequence the cessation and extinction of every kind and degree of evil.

Christ's commission consists of two parts, so connected together, that one part cannot be executed without the other. He could not be the entire *Saviour* of the *world*, without completely destroying every evil propensity, in every individual human being, without which it is impossible that they should ever become happy inhabitants of Heaven. Therefore as God *wills* that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth, he also *wills*, that they should be divested of every species of depravity, which will assuredly be done if Christ has been invested with sufficient powers; which must be the subject of our succeeding inquiry.

Were we to form our judgment from the dictates of reason, and the nature of the subject, we should naturally conclude, that the Father did not send the Son to be the Saviour of the world; and to destroy the works of the devil, without furnishing him with sufficient powers to accomplish these important purposes, for which he was delegated.* But if we have recourse to

* Mat. xxviii. 18.

scripture, we are furnished with ample evidence to convince all those who believe in the authenticity of the testimony, that Christ has already redeemed us from the curse and condemnation of the law, having been made a curse for us.*

"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed, is death."† "Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet: for in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him, &c."‡ Here we find the united powers of both the Father and the Son, are to be exerted to put down or destroy all the rule, authority, and power of every enemy, and destroy every inimical being; for we are told the last enemy shall be destroyed, which is death.

As a further evidence that Christ is both willing and able to defeat the devil, and recover his own property out of his hands, we learn from Colos. i. 15, 16. that Christ is the image of the invisible God, the first born of every creature.

* Gal. iii. 13. † 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, 26. ‡ Heb. ii. 8.

That by him were all things created, that are in Heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created *(en auto)* in him *(di auto)* by him, and *(eis auton)* for himself.

It is therefore evident that the being who has had wisdom and power enough to create all things for himself, must of necessity have wisdom and power enough to govern all things, and to assert his right to, and property in, all the souls which he has made; and even to annihilate the devil himself, should he have the temerity to oppose him!

Is it not more reasonable to believe that the gracious being who created the souls of men, and endued them with such admirable faculties and powers, will also refine and purify them from any dross or foreign matter with which they may have been polluted? Yes, he certainly will cleanse them, for he has promised in the 13th Chap. of Zechariah, that he will refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried, and when this necessary operation is compleated, he will say it is my people, and they shall say, the Lord is my God; or in other words, he will destroy the works of the devil

in them, and restore the image of God in the souls of men, which he created on purpose for himself, to its former likeness, and then will he acknowledge them to be his own people.

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and ye *shall* be my *people*, and I will be your God."*

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:) But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, saith the Lord, I will

* Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27, 28.

put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and *will* be their *God*, and they *shall* be *my people*. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they shall *all* know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."*

Doctor Stonehouse very justly observes, "if all this be true, how idle the supposition, that satan shall be lord of corrupted nature, so long as is Christ of restored nature! or that sinners shall be sinners in hell eternally irrecoverably! Does the scriptures teach us so?

"For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the *devil*."† He will therefore most surely destroy them, and reduce them to nothing; and how? In a few instances only? But his work will be a perfect and accomplished work, extending to every individual: yea, if he should fail in any single instance, his work in that degree would fall short of the purposes of his will, seeing he will have all men to be restored, and come to the ac-

* Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, 33, 34. † 1 John iii. 8.

knowledgement of the truth; which is only saying, in other terms, that he will have all the mischievous works of satan in every man to be utterly defeated and invalidated; he will have all to be restored to life in him.

"But besides these considerations, are not lost souls declared expressly to be our Saviour's? Are we not assured that the lost are those very souls which he came to seek and to restore? So far are these from being unsusceptible of restoration, that they are the very destined subjects of his restoring power, the reason that he is now God man. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to *restore* and *deliver* sinners."*

As a farther evidence that Christ is both willing and able to destroy the works of the devil in the souls of men, it is declared that he appeared in the flesh, and submitted to a painful death, that he might destroy him that hath the power of death, even the devil himself.† When the devil is destroyed, how shall he hold an everlasting possession of the souls of the wicked? And where shall the wicked be found after the works of the devil are all destroyed?

* 1 Tim. i. 15. † Heb. ii. 14.

But if it should really prove true, agreeable to the generally received opinion, that God can neither destroy the devil nor his works, it will be a most curious question, why an omnipotent God should create another being more omnipotent than himself?

The matter is now fairly at issue. Christ has already suffered that death which was to be the means of accomplishing these three important purposes, viz. to be the Saviour of the world, and to destroy the devil, and also his works: and God is now in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.*

But the greatest number of our public teachers take great pains to persuade us, that none of these three important *purposes* will ever be accomplished; while some of them boldly affirm that God never wished or intended that Christ should be the Saviour of the whole world of mankind, but only of a few individuals, which he had arbitrarily chosen out of his mere good pleasure, and abandoned the remainder, an helpless prey to the perpetual dominion of the devil! while others alledge, that God was favourably

* 2 Cor. v. 19.

disposed towards the whole human race, until the unfortunate failure and defection of the representative which the Deity had chosen to act for us. But when Adam transgressed and fell, they say that his posterity lost communion with God, are under his curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever!

By this fatal misfortune, they also assert, that our very nature and dispositions became so corrupted and contaminated, as to render us morally incapable of doing any thing that is good or acceptable to God, and are rendered capable of committing crimes that are infinitely evil. And in this deplorable and helpless condition (into which we were brought by the purpose and appointment of the Deity) they contend that it is perfectly *just* in the Deity to deny and preclude any number from the benefits resulting from the sufferings, death, and perfect righteousness of Christ, who tasted death for every man, and gave himself a ransom for all; and consign us to the peaceable, indisputed dominion of the devil.

The Deity knew positively when he constituted Adam our head and representative, that he would transgress: but he never intended

that we should suffer any inconvenience from the choice which he made for us. He laid this plan to convince mankind by experience, that imperfect beings, just entering on their first stage of action, were incapable of observing and keeping his laws perfectly: but as his laws required perfect obedience, which we could not possibly yield, he made choice of a person most perfectly qualified, in all respects, to be our prophet, priest, and king; by whose merits and righteousness God is reconciled to the world, and is now in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

As this work has been undertaken, and is now progressing, under the direction of an omniscient, omnipotent God and most benevolent mediator, who gave himself a *ransom* for *all*, to be testified in due time, we are confident that he will compleatly accomplish all his benevolent purposes towards the whole human race, notwithstanding the pains that has been taken, by the advocates for the eternal duration of *sin* and *misery*, in conjuring up a devil, which they represent to be an overmatch for a God of infinite goodness, wisdom, and almighty power: and to render their hypothesis the more feasible, they endeavour to reduce the moral character of the

Deity to correspond as nearly as possible with that of his most implacable enemy ; some of them affirming boldly, that God has created vast numbers to be vessels of wrath fitted for destruction ; and in proof of this horrid opinion, they quote the 17th verse of the ixth chapter of Romans, viz. For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee ; and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. But what connexion can we possibly perceive between the circumstance of God's raising up Pharaoh to be king of Egypt, and chastising him severely for his cruel, tyrannical conduct, to be a lasting example to all future tyrants, and in creating milions of souls on purpose to damn them eternally, to shew his irresistible power ? But can any unprejudiced person possibly believe, that a God of infinite goodness, wisdom, and almighty power, should introduce into his system such an infinity of *sin* and *endless misery*, to give him an opportunity to display his almighty power, by crushing a few reptiles, mortals whose existence even for a moment depends on his sustaining power ?

They also endeavour to persuade us, that he hath rendered finite beings morally incapable of doing any action acceptable to God ; but as if

absurdity knew not where to stop, they represent every sin committed by finite beings to be each an *infinite evil*, to afford him an opportunity of shewing his great aversion to sin and sinners, and to gratify his vindictive justice in punishing them throughout eternal ages. If they are criminal who traduce the characters of their fellow mortals, how much more criminal must they be (agreeably to their own standard) who misrepresent the moral character of the merciful parent of the human race!

Archbishop Tillotson (than whom none better understood human nature) says, that "according as men's notions of God are, such will their religion be. If they have gross and false conceptions of God, their religion will be absurd and superstitious. If men fancy God to be an ill-natured being, armed with infinite power, who takes delight in the *misery* and *ruin* of his creatures, and is ready to take all advantages against them, they may *fear him*, but they will also *hate him*; and they will be apt to be such towards one another as they fancy God to be towards them; for all religion doth naturally incline men to imitate him whom they worship."

Doctor Scott, to root out all such injurious notions as derogate from the goodness of God, very justly observes, that "God being infinitely good in his own nature, it is impossible we should conceive him to be better than he is; and therefore every false notion we entertain of his goodness, must detract from it; and so much as we detract from his goodness, so much we detract from the principal reason and motive of our loving him."

There is scarcely a more self-evident truth in nature, than that it is impossible that any rational being who does not *love God*, can be happy; and as impossible, that the being who *fears* and *hates* God, should not be *miserable*. They are therefore *enemies* to both God and man, who insinuate that God is a cruel, partial, passionate, vindictive being, that has dragged millions of souls into existence which he positively knew would be eternally miserable; which might have been prevented either by omitting to create them, or by reforming them, as he had done with many thousands as bad as those whom he rejected; for no created being can resist his *will*. Christ advises us to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and pray for those who persecute

us.* And inculcates these godlike principles as corresponding with the disposition and moral character of our most merciful Father.

But many of our teachers (who call themselves orthodox) tell us, that there are vast numbers of God's enemies that he never will forgive, but will pursue them with the most implacable vengeance throughout eternal ages (as they pretend) to satisfy divine justice, which will never be accomplished; and all this cruelty is exercised because the sinner did not perform what they acknowledge he was never able to do: that is, he could not work out his own salvation by his own righteousness; and the perfect righteousness of Christ had never been imputed to him, by which alone any human being can be saved. For it is Christ "who gave himself for us, that *he* might *redeem* us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works."† It is certain that no human being can be received into Heaven until they are redeemed from all iniquity, and purified to such a degree as to render them zealous of good works. But it is also as certain, from scripture, that they cannot *redeem* and *purify* themselves: for we are told by Christ himself,

* Luke vi. 27. † Titus ii. 14.

that "no man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall be all taught of God, &c."*

Christ, to evince the entire dependence of every created being upon his Father, declares explicitly, both in the 19th and 30th verses of the 5th chapter of John, that he of himself could do nothing. If this was the case with Christ, how much more so must it be with us poor, weak, ignorant mortals? Although it is absolutely necessary that we should come to Christ, he tells us, that no man can come to him, unless the Father draw him, and he will raise him up at the last day; but they will not be left in this helpless condition; for he assures us in the next verse, that they *shall all* be taught of God; alluding to "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:) But this shall

* John vi. 44, 45.

be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and *will* be their *God*, and they *shall* be *my people*. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."* "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the *iniquity* of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none, and the *sins* of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve."†

This is properly termed the covenant of *grace*, in contradistinction to the covenant of works. This, St. Paul tells the Hebrews, is a better covenant than the other, being established upon better promises.

Under this new and better covenant, the Lord himself hath promised to instruct us in a way in which we cannot mistake his meaning; when the Lord shall write his law in their hearts, then shall the illiterate children of men

* Jer. xxxi. 31, 32, 33, 34. † Jer. l. 20.

be no longer perplexed with the discordant systems of their teachers, who all pretend to know God, and to declare what they call his *will* with the greatest confidence, when perhaps scarcely more than two in ten do perfectly agree; while some of them tell us, that God is so good and gracious, that it is his will that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.*

That Christ is the *propitiation* for the sins of the *whole world.*"†

That Christ gave himself a *ransom for all*, to be testified in due time.‡

That the Father sent the Son to be the *Saviour* of the *world.*||

That Christ *died* for all, &c. That God was in Christ, *reconciling* the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.**

That Christ *tasted death* for *every man.* That he will *destroy* him that hath the power of *death*, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who, through

* 1 Tim. ii. 4. ‡ 1 John ii. 2. ‡ 1 Tim. ii. 6.
|| 1 John iv. 14. ** 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 19.

fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

That the Son of God was manifested on purpose to *destroy* the *works* of the devil.†

That Christ hath made peace through the blood of his cross, and will reconcile all things to his Father.‡

That Christ will take and bear away the *sin* of the world.||

That the free gift came upon *all men* to the justification of life.**

That every knee will bow to Jesus, and every tongue confess that he is Lord.††

And that whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.‡‡

That Christ hath obtained eternal *redemption* for us.||||

* Heb. ii. 9, 14, 15. † 1 John iii. 8. ‡ Col. i. 20. || John i. 29. ** Rom. v. 18. †† Phil. ii. 10. ‡‡ 1 John iv. 15. |||| Heb. ix. 12.

That Christ "was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on *him* the *iniquity* of *us all.*"*

They also ground their tenets upon a most explicit promise of Christ himself upon a very solemn occasion, that of his death, saying, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw *all men* unto me. (This he said, signifying what death he should die.)"†

The promise of salvation to *all men*, is so explicitly declared in this text, that the ingenuity of man cannot pervert its meaning. The beings to whom the promise is made, are, in the original Greek, *pantas anthropous*, which in English is, *all men.*

If, therefore, we consider that this promise was made by Christ himself, in a solemn hour when his soul was sore troubled in contemplating the near approach of his crucifixion, and as we are assured that one part of the condition on

* Isa. liii. 5, 6. † John xii. 32, 33.

which the promise was predicated, has been fulfilled, to wit, his being *lifted up* from the *earth*, we have sufficient cause to believe that he will draw all men unto him according to his *wish*, that where he was, they might be also, that they might behold his glory.

But those who appear to be fond of perpetuating the reign of *sin* and *misery*, and establishing the kingdom of the devil on as permanent and durable foundation as that of Jehovah, preach a very different doctrine, and although the various denominations of Christians differ greatly in many things, they all agree in asserting that God has created a vast number of souls which he positively knew would suffer the most excruciating torments in hell flames, throughout an endless eternity. The most moderate class only affirm, that God foreknew and permitted this horrid calamity, but did not decree that this should inevitably be the fate of any one of these, we would beg leave to enquire,

First, Whether they deem it possible for any person to avoid a fate which the Deity positively knew awaited him ?

Secondly, By what means had these nonentities offended him, before they were created, to

provoke him to drag them into existence under these deplorable circumstances?

Thirdly, Had *justice* and *mercy* been *consulted* in this transaction?

Fourthly, Did that insatiable justice (which we are told has not been satisfied with the merits, death, and sufferings of Christ for the sins of mankind) connive at this proceeding, knowing that it would furnish a vast number of subjects, whereon to wreck his *inexorable vengeance* at a future period?

Fifthly, If Christ our present *head*, hath *tasted death* for *every man*, and is the propitiation for the *sins* of the *whole world*, and also redeemed us from the curse of the law of works, upon what *law* is this second claim and denunciation founded? Surely not on any law contained in the covenant of grace. God's *justice* has been already satisfied by the merits, death, and sufferings of Christ, whereby God is reconciled to the world, and is now in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. We would now ask any candid, unprejudiced person, if God is now in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, on what

pretence can the *dæmon revenge* (which Calvin and his adherents has dignified with the sacred name of *justice*) pursue us with *implacable vengeance* throughout eternal ages?

The Universalists teach us, that the future salvation of mankind depends entirely on the benevolence, wisdom, and power of God....that his infinite *benevolence* inspired him to create them....his infinite *wisdom* laid the plan for their redemption....and his infinite *power* must and will accomplish all his purposes, although earth and hell should arise in opposition against him. How irrational! how unscriptural is it to suppose that God created any number of the human race on purpose to make them eternally miserable!

Be candid, gentle reader, lay the prejudice of education aside, and examine the evidences for and against the doctrine of eternal punishment with freedom. The subject is certainly weighty and important, and claims your serious attention and diligent enquiry. The honour of God, and the good of mankind, are involved in its discussion and decision. If it is of importance for us to love God, it is certainly necessary that we should know his true character, which is all glorious. When stripped of the monstrous imputations of *partiality* and *cruelty* at-

tributed to him by numbers who are influenced more by custom and tradition than by scripture and reason, it is a melancholy truth, that there are many absurd doctrines founded upon a partial knowledge and erroneous construction of the scriptures; this circumstance alone should induce us to examine for ourselves, and not confide, too far, in the assumed infallibility of any set or sect of men; and, above all, should we suspect the tenets of those who attribute to the Deity acts of injustice and cruelty, that would scandalize and blacken the character of a Nero or an Herod.

The doctrine of predestination, as taught by John Calvin, is clearly of this kind. See his definition of predestination in the 21st chapter of the third book of his institution of the Christian Religion, 440th page, in the words following, to wit, "Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, whereby he had it determined with himself what he *willed* to become of every man: for all are not created to like estate; but some to eternal *life*, and some to eternal *damnation* is fore-appointed. Therefore, as every man is created to the one or other end, so we say, that he is predestinate, either to life or death, fol. 443. This council, as touching the elect, we say, is grounded upon his free mercy,

without any respect to the worthiness of man; but whom he appointeth to damnation, to them, by his just, indeed, and irreprehensible, but also incomprehensible judgment, the *entry of life is blocked up!*

"Now in the elect, we set vocation to be the testimony of election; and then justification to be another sign, on the manifest shewing of it, till they come to glory, wherein is the fulfilling of it. But as by vocation and election God maketh his elect; so by *shutting out* the *reprobate*, either from the *knowledge* of his *name*, or from the *sanctification* of his *spirit*, he doth, as it were, by these marks, open what judgment abideth for them."

According to this scheme, the elect and the devil are the only parties who are under the least obligation to the Deity; the elect for the unmerited partiality shewn to them; and the devil must be ungrateful, indeed, if he does not exert himself to the uttermost to inflict the most infernal tortures on those souls which Calvin supposes God to have made on purpose for him, to people his infernal kingdom, and establish it upon a permanent foundation. Is it not an happy circumstance when Monarchs agree to assist each other in such a cordial

manner? The poor devil could not create subjects for himself, but, by Calvin's contrivance, we find him amply accommodated. If all this be true, how egregiously must John have been mistaken, when he tells us, that the Son of God was manifested on purpose to destroy the works of the devil!* But before we implicitly adopt this scheme, permit us to make use of a little earnal reason to analyze it, and enquire by what means the reprobate becomes a subject justly liable to eternal punishment.

When God created the soul of the reprobate, he certainly made it what he wished it to be; and the poor reprobate had no choice respecting what he should be, whether good or bad.... whether an angel or devil. If it was the *will* of God (even before he created him) that he should be a *reprobate* and a *sinner*, that he might be eternally *damned*, could the poor, miserable being be *justly blamed* for being what the Deity had made him, without his knowledge or consent? If he was constituted in such a manner as to bring his "damnation with him, out of his mother's belly," it certainly could not be his *fault*, but a most deplorable misfortune. But can any rational being, who is not entirely blind-

* 1 John iii. 8.

ed by the prejudice of education, believe that any person can be justly punished for submitting to an inevitable misfortune which it never was in their power to avoid or prevent? But we are told that the damnation of the reprobate is *just*, because he will not come to Christ, that he might be saved. But does not Christ tell us, explicitly, that no man can come unto him except the Father draw him?* But instead of the Father being disposed to draw the reprobate, Calvin tells us, "that he has blocked up the entry of life against him, and shut him out both from the knowledge of his name, and from the sanctification of his spirit."

God is the source and fountain of all goodness of every kind, and there is no other source in the universe from whence it can be derived but from him. If, therefore, he creates human beings, and refuses to communicate any of his goodness to them, can it possibly be either *just* or *merciful* to *damn* them eternally for the want of that goodness, which it was impossible for them to obtain?

It is no wonder that those who have preached this doctrine have laboured to persuade people

* John vi. 44.

to abandon the use of their reason; for, until this is done, it is impossible to believe it. The prejudice of education has implanted it in the infant mind, and may yet preserve some vestiges of it for some time longer; but as it can neither stand the test of reason, nor the true theological standard, which is founded upon the glorious attributes of the Deity, it must finally fall; and it is high time that it should be discarded; for it has already stocked the world with deists, and the Clergy now find great fault with the effects which the absurdity of their own tenets have naturally produced: for whenever people can divest themselves of the prejudice of education, and begin to reason on this subject, and are led to believe that these God-dishonouring sentiments are contained in the scriptures, they rather choose to be directed by the light of nature and experience; which teaches them that the Deity is the most benevolent, impartial, bountiful, and merciful being in existence, than to believe without, or rather contrary to, both reason and experience, that he is the most partial, cruel, revengeful, implacable, and unjust being in the universe, creating reprobates, and forcing them into the world, under his wrath and curse, and then damning them eternally for being what he had made them!

If this doctrine is not the *unpardonable sin*, it is certainly very nearly allied to it. The unpardonable sin of the Jews consisted in insinuating that Christ was in league with the devil, by which means he acquired the power to cast out devils by the assistance of Beelzebub, the prince of devils. If we could suppose this compact possible, it was calculated to be productive of some good to the poor wretches out of whom the devils were cast. But Calvin's assertion, that God creates souls which he has reprobated by an eternal decree, and blocked up the entry of life against them, shut them out from the knowledge of his name, and from the sanctification of his spirit, and appoints them to eternal damnation, thereby consigning them to the dominion of the devil, to people the infernal regions, and establish the reign of *vice* and *misery* upon an eternal basis, that can never be shaken, is certainly worse.

This is such a malignant aspersion of the moral character of the Deity, that the sin of the Jews seems to vanish in the comparison.—But we need no better evidence to prove that this is a most groundless calumny, than the merciful forbearance of God: for if he was such a wrathful, revengeful being as they represent him to be, he would strike them dead in the very act

of defaming him, whose kind providence is protecting them from evil every moment. But we hope that Christ will make the same apology for them that he did for the Jews, saying, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. This scheme (by which they suppose the satanic empire amply stocked with subjects, properly qualified for that region) they have dignified with the appellation of the covenant of *grace*. This they proclaim as glad tidings to all men; this they call bringing life and immortality to light! If this be a covenant of grace, it is very different from that which the Lord has promised to make with the people of Israel and Judah, when he will put his law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be his people; and the Lord himself shall be their teacher, when they shall all know him, from the least of them to the greatest of them: and will forgive their iniquity, and will remember their sin no more.

It surely is not in his nature
To be cruel as the grave:
Believe not our divine Creator
Will destroy what he can save.

A Dialogue between a Partialist and an Universalist.

Par. Sir, motives of friendship have induced me to call upon you this morning, to converse with you upon a subject which has agitated the public mind for some time past. I mean the doctrine of the universal restoration of *all men* to the favour of God; which has been fairly confuted, and cut up by the roots, in three sermons lately preached by the Rev. Mr. George Strebeck; who has demonstrated that sin is an infinite evil, and therefore justly subjects the sinner to an infinite punishment: and as I have been informed that you are writing in favour of this doctrine, which is now fairly invalidated, I wish you to retreat from the field in time, and not wait until you are driven out with disgrace; for your strongest fortress is already taken by storm.

Univ. Pray, Sir, has Mr. Strebeck demonstrated that sin has had an eternal existence as a self-existent, evil principle?

Par. No: I conceive he is not so simple as to believe such an absurdity.

Univ. By what arguments, then, does he attempt to prove, that any thing can be infinite

which has not had an eternal existence? We know only of three infinites, which are God, eternity, and space; and these have existed necessarily and eternally....they never have had a beginning, and can never have an end....they cannot admit of any augmentation, diminution, or any possible change. But if Mr. Strebeck imagines that he has discovered a kind of compound, factitious infinities, which have been produced by an illicit act of a finite agent, acting upon the *irascible passions* of an infinite being, he has certainly made a new discovery, for which he should obtain a patent. If he has been successful in proving sin to be an infinite evil, he has done more than he intended: for the same arguments that will fairly prove sin to be infinite, will also prove it to be indestructible; for that which is absolutely infinite, can neither be destroyed in whole or in part; but must be as immutable as God, eternity, and space. If sin is not an eternal principle (as the Manichæans suppose) it cannot be infinite; for were we even to suppose with Mr. Strebeck, that it derived some part of its infinity from the infinite displeasure of God, it would even in that case be finite, having had a beginning; and whatever has had a beginning, must also come to an end, unless it is sustained in being by infinite power; and we cannot reasonably sup-

pose that God will exert his infinite power to *perpetuate sin* and *misery*, which are acknowledged to be the works of the devil, who, being a finite agent, could not be the cause of any thing infinite, as no *cause* can produce an *effect* superior to itself.

It is evident that whatever is infinite, cannot admit of either increase or diminution; for a progressive or mutable infinity is a contradiction in terms; for if an addition can be made, it is evident that it was not infinite previous to such addition: for example, if every sin is an infinite crime, A. commits a crime to-day, which renders him infinitely criminal; he commits another sin next day....he must now either be more than infinitely criminal, or the first crime being infinite, precluded the possibility of increase. According to this scheme, *sin* would be an absolute *unit*, that could admit of no addition. But if we were, for argument sake, to admit this statement, that the first sin being infinite, could admit of no augmentation, it will not support the conclusion which Mr. Strebeck wishes to establish, viz. that because sin is an infinite evil, it is just to inflict an infinite punishment upon the sinner; as it will be remembered that his most weighty argument to prove sin to be an infinite evil, is, that Christ

has made an *infinite atonement* and *satisfaction* for *sin*; agreeably to the phraseology of John, when he saw Jesus coming to him, says, Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the *sin* of the *world*.* Now if Christ (who is the *head* of every man) has made an infinite atonement and satisfaction for *sin* in the aggregate, to wit, the sin of the world, how can it be either just or merciful to inflict an infinite punishment upon the persons for whose sins an infinite atonement has been made by the Saviour of the world, who hath tasted death for every man?† And who is also the *propitiation* for the *sins* of the *whole* world.‡

John testifies, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world,§ and not as the Partialists conceive, the Saviour of a few individuals; the majority being consigned to the devil, not because the Deity *could not* save them, but because he did not *wish* to do it! But what will become of this fine scheme, if what we are told by John be true, to wit, that the Son of God was manifested, on purpose to destroy the works of the devil,‖ which are acknowledged to be sin and misery? However, if Mr. Stre-

* John i. 29. † Heb. ii. 9. ‡ 1 John ii. 1, 2.
§ 1 John iv. 14. ‖ 1 John iii. 8.

beck can fairly demonstrate that sin is an infinite evil, we must grant that it cannot be destroyed; and, in consequence, that Christ's mission must prove abortive.

But as we conceive that there cannot be a more self-evident axiom, than that whatever has not been infinite eternally cannot be made so in time (not even a parte post) without the immediate sustaining power of God; and as God has sent his beloved Son into the world to destroy the works of the devil; and not only his works, but the old traitor himself;* we therefore cannot believe that God is divided against himself, or that Christ, mistaking the design of his mission, should, instead of destroying the works of the devil, destroy the souls of men, who were created *(en auto)* in him *(di auto)* by him, and *(eis auton)* for himself,† should he stock the infernal regions with subjects, and establish the kingdom and dominion of the devil upon a basis equally permanent with that of his Father.... Was it for this purpose he was sent into the world? No, verily, he was sent to be the *Saviour* of the world;‡ and to do the *will* of his Father, whose will is, that *all men* should be *saved*, and come unto the knowledge of the truth;

* Heb. ii. 14. † Colos. i. 16. ‡ 1 John iv. 14.

and for this purpose he gave himself a *ransom for all*, to be testified in due time:* and we trust he will not leave the ransomed in possession of the enemy: for he has promised, that if he should be lifted up from the earth, he would draw *(pantas anthropous)* that is, *all men* unto him.† And because he is faithful who hath promised, we believe him. St. Paul told the Galatians seventeen hundred years ago, that Christ had *redeemed* us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.‡ But we shall gain little by a *redemption* from the *curse* of the *law*, if Mr. Strebeck has discovered a *curse* of the *gospel* that will answer the purpose quite as well. But if we can collect his precise meaning from the circuitous method by which he endeavours to prove the truth of one controvertible proposition by another, which requires proof as much as the first, we will endeavour to analyze the subject more critically. The drift of his circular argument appears to be an attempt to prove, that the dignity of the being offended, and not the knowledge or capacity of the being offending, constitutes the scale or standard of criminality. He observes in the 25th page, that "It is material to the present argument, to understand distinctly in what point of light the

* 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4, 6. † John xii. 32. ‡ Gal. iii. 13.

Universalists consider sin." He then states Doctor Chauncey's sentiments, who says, "In what point of light soever we take a view of sin, it is certainly in its nature a finite evil. It is the fault of a finite creature, and the effect of finite principles, passions, and appetites." This, says he, is the light in which he (Dr. Chauncey) considered sin. And now follows the conclusion which he draws from this view of it. "To say, that the sinner is doomed to infinite misery for the finite faults of a finite life, looks like a reflection on the infinite *justice* and *goodness* of God."

Mr. S. then observes, that the whole stress of the argument rests upon this inquiry, whether sin be a finite or an infinite evil? It is of importance to examine this subject, for if sin be but a finite evil, the conclusion would be undeniably correct, that it would be *unjust in* God to *punish* the *sinner eternally* for his finite offences. He says, considered subjectively, as the mere act of a finite being, it would appear that sin is only a finite evil. But we are to reason on the heinousness of offences, not only from the state of the *subject*, but likewise from that of the *object* of them. He then states a case to shew the different degrees of criminality, of which a person would be guilty, who might have offended his

fellow-*subject*, or a *prince* his lawful sovereign. The offence in the first case might only amount to an assault or defamation, but in the latter case to high treason. He then argues, that as sin is committed against God, an infinite being, it must, in an *objective* point of light, be an infinite evil....that a just God was displeased with sin, who, being infinite, his displeasure must be infinite also....and that as God was infinitely displeased, the evil of sin, at which he was offended, must have been infinite also.

The drift of this circuitous argument appears to be designed to prove, that the dignity of the being offended, and not the knowledge and capacity of the being offending, constitutes the scale or standard of criminality.

This is the extrinsic cause which he conceives capable of transmuting or converting *finite* crimes into *infinite evils*, which are so very offensive to the Deity that it creates in him an infinite degree of displeasure. To be eternally under the influence of infinite anger or displeasure, would certainly be a most unpleasant situation; and we humbly conceive, that if God could, strictly speaking, be made angry, provoked, or grieved by the conduct of us wretched mortals, he would not enjoy a moments quiet, but must

be much more miserable than the most unhappy of his creatures. But if we may be indulged in the use of a little carnal reason, we will venture to analyze this infinite principle, by which he supposes finite crimes to be convertable into infinite evils, to wit, the dignity of the being offended. If this be true, it is evident that an action simply finite, acquires its infinity and malignity from an adventitious, extrinsic cause, of which the agent must, in many cases, be entirely ignorant. This must be the case with all idiots; and it is evident that the degree of criminality must vary with every variation of the degrees of knowledge of the persons who might commit the same crime. For example, suppose the best informed Clergyman, and the most ignorant savage, both to be guilty of *incest*, by cohabiting with their own sisters; would any judicious person pronounce them equally criminal? Common sense declares they would not. And the apology which Christ made for the Jews, who were crucifying him, confirms the judgment; when he prayed to his Father to forgive them, he offers this cogent reason *why* it would be equitable to forgive them, to wit, because they *know not* what they do! If the Jews had positively known that they were crucifying the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, would not Mr. Strebeck himself pronounce them more crimi-

nal on account of their certain knowledge of the extent and malignity of the crime which they were perpetrating? And if they were infinitely criminal without this knowledge, would they not have been much more criminal if they had known it? If so, agreeably to the premises, the conclusion must be, that every sinner is infinitely criminal; but that some are infinitely more criminal than others.

But here we will rest this part of the subject at present, until Mr. Strebeck can furnish us with a well graduated scale, by which we may calculate the different degrees of infinity with as much precision as we now do yards, feet, and inches, by the common scale, beginning with Calvin's infants who bring their *damnation* out of their mothers' *bellies*, who are said in the Westminster Catechism to be born under the *wrath* and *curse* of God, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the *pains* of *hell forever!* and all this evil brought upon them, not by their own *agency*, but by the transgression of a person which the Deity had appointed to act for them, near six thousand years ago. If it could possibly be either *just* or merciful to punish an infant eternally for the crime of another person, yet surely this *imputed guilt* must be the lowest on the scale of infinity. And

those who traduce and misrepresent the moral character of the Deity, should form the highest grade on the scale, as certainly their crime is infinitely more infinite than any other.

But common sense has yet another argument (sanctioned by the opinion of Bishop Tillotson) to combat this cruel, injurious doctrine, to wit, that "the right which God hath in his creatures, is founded on the benefits he hath conferred on them, and the obligations they have to him on that account. Now there is none, who, because he has done a benefit, can have, by virtue of that, a right to do a greater *evil* than the good he has done amounts to; and we think it next to madness to doubt whether extreme and eternal *misery* be not a greater *evil* than simple being is a *good*."

All punishment which has not reformation for its end, is mere cruelty and malice, which can never be in God, nor can he in reality hate any thing which he has made, or be subject to such weakness or impotence as to act arbitrarily, or out of spite, wrath, revenge, or any self-interest; and, consequently, whatever chastisement he inflicts, must be a mark of his *love*, in not suffering his creatures to remain in that

miserable state which is inseparable from *sin* and wickedness.

As God's infinite goodness appears in the sanctions as well as matter of his laws, so his infinite wisdom knows how to adjust the chastisement to the offence, that it may be exactly fitted to produce the desired amendment. Our greatest felicity consists in having such an impartial, disinterested judge, as well as legislator, that whether he punishes or rewards, he acts alike for our good; that being the end of all his laws, and consequently of the penalties as well as rewards, which make them laws: whereas our common systems of divinity represent him to be full of wrath and fury, ready to glut himself with revenge for the injuries he has suffered by the breach of his laws.

But we wish Mr. Strebeck to re-consider this subject candidly; for if every sin be an infinite evil, it is evident that all sins would be reduced to a state of equality; so that the boy who should steal a pigeon's egg, would be as criminal as Judas Iscariot, or a person who might commit the unpardonable sin: for to assert in any case, where two things are infinite, that one may be vastly more infinite than the other, would be as absurd as if one should affirm, that

Madeira wine was the best liquor possible, but that Tokay wine was vastly better; that is, a great deal *better* than the *best*.

Q. What may be denominated good or virtuous in a physical and moral sense?

A. Whatever has a tendency to produce permanent happiness.

Q. What may be denominated vice, or moral and physical evil?

A. Whatever has a tendency to produce and perpetuate discord, confusion, and misery.

Q. Is not every rational being under an indispensable obligation to promote virtue and rational happiness, and endeavour to obviate the evils which introduce and perpetuate misery?

A. Yes: this is an eternal, unchangeable law of nature, and of nature's God, and is of universal obligation on every rational being, from the highest to the lowest, in proportion to their powers, situations, and capacities. Those who neglect to perform these duties, are delinquent; and those who transgress this law, by promoting vice, or causing needless misery, are criminal.

Q. Would not a being possessing superior power, forfeit all legitimate claim to the attributes of *justice* and benevolence, who should drag any number of innocent, unoffending beings out of a situation in which they could suffer no positive injury, and place them in a condition in which he positively knew they would suffer every possible evil, and be eternally precluded from the enjoyment of every possible degree of happiness?

A. Calvin attributes such conduct to the Deity, and calls it *justice!*

It is certain that nonentity could not offend the Deity, nor could inanimate matter transgress his laws; therefore the materials out of which we were formed, could not have provoked his displeasure; and although the parable of the potter and his lump of clay, may and does prove, that the Deity has a sovereign right to make a man and an archangel out of the same mass of matter, it can never prove that he has a right, founded in *justice*, to form an human being out of this unoffending mass, positively knowing that it would suffer every possible *evil* throughout eternal ages, and be precluded from the enjoyment of every possible *good*, when all this mischief and misery might have been pre-

vented either by *willing* that all his rational creatures should be finally happy, or by omitting to create all those who many have supposed he has forced into existence without having wished or designed to render them finally happy!

Q. But is it not more rational, more scriptural, and more conducive to the honour of God and the good of mankind, to teach, and to believe, that our heavenly Father, who has it completely in his power to make the most eligible choice for those subordinate beings who are entirely dependent upon him, should finally fix all his rational creatures in a state of virtue and permanent felicity, than that he should abandon any of them to the permanent dominion of the devil, to *sin* and *suffer* during eternal ages?

A. It is certainly most reasonable; for as *virtue* and *happiness* are evidently preferable to *vice* and *misery*, how can we believe that a God of infinite goodness, who must discern and prefer that which is *best*, should combine with the powers of darkness to establish the permanent reign of both *moral* and *physical evil*?

The advocates for the eternal duration of *sin* and *misery*, must conclude either that the Deity approves of the establishment of the devil's

kingdom; or, although he may view it as a nuisance, he is not able to destroy it. Both these conclusions being *absurd*, we are constrained to believe the truth of what we are told, 1 John iii. 8. That the Son of God was manifested on purpose to destroy the works of the devil, which works are evidently *moral* and *physical evil*, which we believe he will effectually accomplish; and that Christ will not satify himself with annihilating his works only, but will destroy the devil himself: for we read, Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might *destroy* him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.* Therefore, when sin, death, and the devil are destroyed, misery must cease, for the sting of death is sin.... Then shall God "wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."†

To affirm with the rigid Partialists, that God has forced millions of human beings into existence under an immutable decree of *reprobation*, and sentenced them to eternal torments long before they ever did or could transgress, is blas-

* Heb. ii. 14. † Rev. xxi. 4.

pheming the moral character of God. But there are many well meaning people, who, although they decry the horrid opinion that the Deity ever created any human being on purpose to make him eternally miserable, yet they believe that the Deity foresaw, and infallibly knew every crime they should ever commit; for which he also knew, that they should incur his wrath and curse, and suffer the pains of hell forever. Here I would beg leave to ask,

First, Is it possible for any human being to avoid doing an action which the Deity positively foreknew he would do? Or to escape that eternal punishment which they suppose the Deity has annexed as a penalty for the perpetration of these crimes?

Secondly, Is it probable that the Deity would use means to prevent any event which he positively knew would infallibly come to pass?

Thirdly, Is it possible for any human being to merit eternal salvation by any thing he can do or perform, without the efficacious assistance of the Deity?

Fourthly, Is it in our power to merit, and command this assistance?

Fifthly, If the Deity pleases to withhold this necessary aid, are we to be blamed and punished eternally for not doing that which the Calvinists confess it is impossible for us to perform?

Although they confess our incapacity now, they alledge that we were furnished with sufficient powers in Adam, our federal head, to enable us to have kept the laws of God perfectly; but as we were not in being at the time, the Deity chose Adam as our representative to act for us, and if he had obeyed his Maker, and fulfilled his injunction, they presume that all his posterity would have been happy in consequence of his obedience; but as he transgressed, his guilt was imputed to all his posterity, which, they say, gave the Deity a *just* and equitable right to sentence and send the whole human race to eternal perdition!

But as it is impossible to vindicate the justice of imputing the guilt of Adam's trangression to his posterity on any other principle than that of his being our representative and head, *chosen* by *God* to act for us; so, also, it is impossible that God intended any individual of the human race should suffer any real injury by a plan which he had concerted in infinite wisdom and goodness. He therefore had provided for us an-

other and better *head* and representative instead of Adam; to wit, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a *ransom for all*, to be testified in due time.*

St. Paul tells the Corinthians he would have them know that the *head* of *every man* is *Christ*, and that the *head* of *Christ* is *God*.† This second connexion is certainly preferable to the first; for if Christ is the *head* of every man, he certainly will never resign any of his members to the devil, if he is possessed of wisdom and power to prevent it. He has already fulfilled the law for us, having suffered the penalty in our stead; for, when by the offence of Adam *judgment* came upon *all men* to *condemnation*; even so, by the righteousness of our present glorious *head*, the *free gift* came upon *all men* (*pantas anthropous*) unto the *justification* of *life*.‡ We are assured, that "as in *Adam* all *die*, even so in *Christ* shall all be made *alive*. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."‖ Thus we find by these and a number of other passages of scripture, that the entire work of our salvation was, and is to be carried on, and finally

* 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. † 1 Cor. xi. 3. ‡ Rom. v. 18. ‖ 1 Cor. xv. 22, 49.

compleated by *proxy*. God in the first place chose Adam as our head and representative, without our knowledge or consent, who transgressed and fell without our agency or knowledge. The guilt of his transgression is said to be imputed to us long before we existed; not that the Deity intended that we should suffer any real inconvenience from the choice which he made for us by the appointment of a representative which he infallibly knew would transgress: for we are told that God hath concluded us all in unbelief (why, that he might damn us all?) No, by no means; but that he might have *mercy upon all.**

To answer this just and benevolent purpose, he had prepared another and better *head* and representative for us, long before we existed, by whose righteousness we are to be justified, and not by our own.

"Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge

* Rom. xi. 32.

of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is, by faith of Jesus Christ, *unto all*, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference [no partiality.] For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness [not ours] for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God: to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also."*

By the above statement it appears, evidently, that the first covenant which was made by God with Adam, as our federal head, was violated and broken without our knowledge or agency,

* Rom. iii. 19 to 30.

long before we existed. We could in this case be accounted criminal only by means of the delinquency of the *agent* which the Deity *chose* to act *for us*; and therefore we could not be *justly* liable to God's *wrath* and *curse* to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. See the Westminster Catechism.

But in the covenant which God the Father made with Christ on our behalf, it is positively declared that we are to be justified and saved by the righteousness of Christ, and not by the deeds of the law; that is, by any thing which we can perform to merit salvation; therefore, if we miscarry a second time, it must happen through some defect in the plan, or by the delinquency of our present federal *head.*

If the imputation of the guilt of Adam's sin to his posterity be tenable or justifiable on any rational ground, it must be on condition of the full and free imputation of the perfect righteousness of Christ, our present *head*, to every individual descendant of Adam: for to impute the guilt of Adam's disobedience and transgression to any individual who should be precluded from the benefit of Christ's obedience and perfect righteousness, would not only be unjust, but

extremely cruel. This assertion requires no logical argument to prove it, because it will be self-evident to every unprejudiced mind. But can any thing in nature be more monstrous, than to suppose a God of infinite goodness should send an infant into the world under his *wrath* and *curse*, loaded with imputed guilt....divested of the principles of moral rectitude.... the most helpless of the animal creation....devoid of every kind and degree of knowledge, being an imitative animal, subject to be initiated into almost every vice and error....even before their own reason begins to dawn, they are liable to contract vicious habits, and acquire evil propensities, which cannot be easily eradicated! And in this deplorable condition many of them are supposed to be deserted by the God that made them, and left without the efficacious operations of his spirit to extricate themselves from this labyrinth of evils or perish eternally; to which the Partialists say, they are justly liable even for Adam's transgression. And they will not allow that our present inability can be plead in mitigation of our delinquencies or transgressions; because, they alledge, we had power given to us in Adam, but that we sinned in him, and fell with him, by which we lost it; and that God was under no obligation to restore it, nor to remit any part of our duty, on account of our

moral inability. And as the covenant of *grace* is *conditional*, as well as the covenant of works, there is still something which the sinner must do, to entitle him to the benefits resulting from it.... he must *believe*....he must have faith. Very true; he must believe; but this, like every good we receive and enjoy, is also the gift of God. The Apostle tells the Ephesians, "For by grace ye are saved through faith; and that *not* of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, least any man should boast."* For it is evidently impossible for a person to believe any proposition whatever, until his understanding is convinced by the force of evidence, and then it is no longer in his power to disbelieve or withhold his assent; and it is also the peculiar prerogative of the Deity, not only to point out the object of our faith, which is Jesus of Nazareth, but also to furnish the evidence and the means of conveying it to the remotest parts of the earth, so as to carry conviction to the mind of every man, either in this stage of action or at some future period.

The object of our faith is declared by Peter, where he tells us, That there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we

*Ephes. ii. 8, 9.

must be saved, but that of Jesus of Nazareth.* And St. Paul tells us, Romans x. 13, That whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved; but asks in the next verse, How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? This being a plain statement of a very important case, we would ask those who are conversant in history and geography,

First, Whether they do not firmly believe, that many millions have lived, and died without ever having heard the name of Jesus of Nazareth mentioned?

Secondly, Whether any reasonable, unprejudiced person can suppose it to be compatible with the infinite justice and benevolence of the Deity, to sentence these ignorant millions to eternal perdition for not believing in him, and calling upon his name for mercy, of whom they had never heard, and to whom no preacher had ever been sent?

* Acts iv. 12.

Thirdly, Is it possible that the first opportunity afforded to them of the means whereby they might have been saved, will be when they are aroused from the sleep of death, and summoned before the judgment-seat to receive their sentence to eternal perdition, for not having heard of, believed on, or called upon the name of the Lord Jesus, which they never had heard mentioned?

This certainly will never be the fate of these poor mortals who died ignorant of the means of salvation. Because we are told in Philippians, and in other parts of scripture, that there shall be a time, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.* And we have the testimony of John, that, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God."†

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."‡

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart

* Phil. ii. 10. † 1 John v. 1. ‡ 1 John iv. 15.

that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."*

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."†

"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaids, in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens, and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall *call* on the *name* of the *Lord shall be delivered.*"‡

By what is revealed in this prophesy, it appears that there will be an uncommon out-pouring of the spirit upon all flesh before the great and terrible day of the Lord, that even the menial servants shall be inspired; which will, doubtless, be one means of diffusing that universal knowledge of the Lord, which is promis-

*Rom. x. 9. † Acts ii. 21. ‡ Joel ii. 28 to 32.

ed in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, and the 8th chapter of Hebrews, until all shall know him from the least of them to the greatest of them. But if it should be alledged that these gracious promises are made only to those who may be living at that time; and that these poor, ignorant beings, who never had heard the name of Jesus mentioned while living on earth, nor until they are summoned to appear before him at the last day, and are then told that the personage seated on the throne to judge the world is Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, who had been sent by his Father to be the *Saviour* of the *world*, and that he had frequently and solemnly promised to *save all* those who should believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God, and call on his name for mercy; we ask, can any rational being doubt that they will most firmly believe that he is the Son of God, or suppose that they will not be disposed to call upon him with fervency to save them also? And if they embrace the first opportunity that has ever been offered to them of believing in, and calling upon, the name of the Lord for mercy, is it not most probable that he will fulfil his promise to them, by saving them both from the guilt and sting of sin, and protecting them from misery? For he has promised to forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. But notwithstanding

the numerous declarations in scripture to the contrary, there are numbers who appear to be extremely anxious to limit the benevolence of the Deity towards the human species to this life or present stage of action, who alledge that all those who die impenitent, or that are not regenerated in this life, are abandoned by the Deity, and forever precluded from receiving any benefit by the mediation of Christ, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, who came on purpose to seek and to save that which was lost;* and to be the Saviour of the world;† and who, in the progress of this important work, has *tasted death* for *every man*.‡ Isaiah, proclaiming the universal invitation of his God, says, "Look unto me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by myself, the word has gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. In the Lord shall *all* the *seed* of *Israel* be *justified*, and shall glory."|| This prophesy is repeated and explained, wherefore God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name

* Luke xix. 10. † 1 John iv. 14. ‡ Heb. ii. 9.
|| Isa. xlv. 22, 23, 25.

of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.*

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."†

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.‡

"And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord, shall be delivered."‖

Here we find Isaiah, in the name of God, proclaiming a promise of salvation to *all men*, even to the ends of the earth; and, to induce them to confide in his gracious promise, he confirms it by a solemn oath, saying, that unto him every knee should bow, and every tongue should swear; and concludes with a promise, that in the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory. But St. Paul, probably foreseeing that many false teachers would

* Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11. † 1 John iv. 15. ‡ Rom. x. 9. ‖ Joel ii. 32.

arise, who would take great pains to limit the goodness and universal benevolence of the Deity to a few individuals of their own sect, and damn all those who did not implicitly believe their tenets, has taken some pains to render the promise more explicit. He tells us, that God hath highly exalted the Saviour of the world, and given him a name above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. But least they should construe the general terms *every knee*, and *every tongue*, to mean those of a few individuals only, he includes the whole creation by comprehending *all* that are in *Heaven*, and that are on *earth*, or that are *under* the *earth*.

We would now ask any rational, unprejudiced person, if they can possibly believe, that when the whole human race are upon their knees before the throne of the benevolent Jesus, confessing him to be their Lord to the glory of God, and swearing allegiance to him as their lawful sovereign, and most fervently calling upon him for mercy, that he will then spurn them from his presence, and sentence them to suffer eternal torments? No; it is impossible: for the same Jesus sits judge who prayed for his mur-

derers! He that was sent to be the Saviour of the world, not to condemn it, and also to destroy the works of the devil;* which works are allowed by all to be sin, and misery its natural consequence; and not to perpetuate and establish the kingdom and dominion of the devil, to be equal in duration and stability with the kingdom of his Father. The benevolent parent of mankind sent his beloved Son into the world to accomplish two very important purposes, to wit, to be the Saviour of the world, and to destroy the works of the devil. But if he should establish the kingdom of the devil, and *perpetuate sin* and *misery* by consigning millions of the souls which God declares he had made for himself, to the permanent dominion of his most implacable enemy, to sin and suffer eternally, is it not demonstrably evident that he would act diametrically contrary to the purpose of his mission, by preserving and perpetuating the *works* of the *devil*, and consigning the works of his Father to everlasting destruction, even the souls which he has made? But if he is the same God yesterday, today, and forever, this deplorable consummation of all things will never be realized. For Christ tells us to ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be open-

* 1 John iii. 8.

ed unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it *shall* be *opened.**

Christ presuming that the Jews were not so arrogant as to pretend to be more bountiful than his Father, asks them, If a son shall ask bread of any of you being a father, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?....He then concludes by asking them, If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him!

But in order to destroy the consolations which might be derived from these gracious promises, and evade and invalidate the arguments grounded thereon in support of the divine benignity of our heavenly Father, our opponents contend, that the infinite benevolence of the Deity towards the human race is limited and confined to this life, during which period we must be convinced, converted, and regenerated, otherwise his *divine love* will be converted into the most implacable *hatred* and interminable *cruelty*. They affirm

* Luke xi. 9, 10.

that the door of mercy will be eternally closed against all those who die impenitent; but whoever will discard prejudice, and read the vision of the dry bones, with a desire to discover the real disposition of our heavenly Father towards his children, will find sufficient evidence to convince them that the mercy of God endureth *forever;* and that his loving kindness is not withdrawn from those who have died in their sins. God conducts the prophet in a vision to a valley full of dry bones, and after he had viewed them, the Lord asked him, Son of man, can these bones live? As we now ask, Is it possible that those who have died in sin should ever be revived by the power of God to a life of righteousness and peace?

It appeared as improbable to the prophet, that these dry bones should live, as it now does to the greatest number of our Clergy, that a dead sinner should ever be raised by the power of God to live a life of righteousness. He therefore evades giving his opinion, and answers, O Lord God thou knowest! But the greatest number of our prophets are not so diffident as Ezekiel; for they determine positively, that dead sinners cannot be raised and taken into favour by God. He however prophesied as he was commanded, and the breath came into

them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet an exceeding great army. Then he said unto me, Son of man, *these bones* are the *whole house* of *Israel:* behold, they say, our bones are dried, and our hope is lost....we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, thus saith the Lord God, Behold, O my people, I will open your *graves*, and cause you to come up out of your *graves*, and bring you into the land of Israel; and ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your *graves*, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves; and shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.— And say unto them, thus saith the Lord God, behold I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and I will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land. And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel, and one king shall be king to them all, and they shall no more be two nations, &c. And David, my servant, shall be king over them, and they shall have one shepherd: and they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them. Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them, it shall be an everlast-

ing covenant with them, and I will place them, and multiply them, and I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. Yea, I *will* be their *God*, and they *shall be* my people.*

Presuming that it will not be alledged, that the Lord was mistaken when he told the prophet, saying, Son of man, these *bones* are the *whole house* of *Israel*, I shall proceed to observe, that the Deity has promised, in the most explicit, unequivocal language, to raise the whole posterity of Jacob up out of their graves, who may have died, until the period when this prophesy shall be fulfilled, and bring them, together with all their brethren who may be living in exile, and place them in their own land; when they shall forever afterwards be united in one kingdom. He then declares, that he will make an everlasting covenant of peace with them, and promises twice in this chapter, that he will be their God, and that they shall be his people.

As our intention in citing this chapter is to prove that God does not abandon those to the permanent dominion of the devil who may die in an unregenerated state, in order, therefore, to discuss and dertermine this important proposi-

* Ezek. xxxvii. 1, 10, 11 to 14, 21, 24, 26, 27.

tion fairly, it behoves us candidly to examine the Jewish history, and judge from the information which we collect there, whether it is certain, or even probable, that all the Jews who shall be raised from their graves at that period had been regenerated previous to their death; for if they were not converted, but had died in their sins, it demonstrably follows, that their heavenly Father will not abandon them to eternal perdition, because they had not believed in the Saviour of the world in this life; because he has promised (who is faithful to perform) to make an everlasting covenant of peace with them....to put his spirit into them....and that he will be *their God*, and that they shall be his *people*.

Whoever can seriously doubt or dispute the reality of this predicted resurrection and posthumous restoration to the favour of God, may, with as much propriety, doubt the reality of every other, even that of Lazarus; for none are so particularly narrated. But if any Partialist, who has not been in the habit of estimating the benignity of the Deity as highly as we have done, should conceive, that in construing this chapter we have *exaggerated* and *overrated* his *goodness* and *clemency*, we are willing to hear what they have to say on the subject. But if they should prove successful in their attempt to convince

us that there is not (even one) truly benevolent character in the universe, we shall not cease to lament the deplorable condition of all intelligent beings.

But if any farther evidence were necessary to establish the benevolent disposition and character of the Deity, who has been, and still is, represented to be a cruel, partial, vindictive, inexorable being, we are furnished with an ample refutation of this groundless calumny in the 16th chapter of Ezekiel, where he promises, in the most explicit terms, that he will yet have mercy upon the inhabitants of Sodom, Samaria, and Jerusalem, to be pacified towards them, and to establish an everlasting covenant with them; but as he perfectly knew the propensity that would prevail in the latter ages to pervert and explain away the true meaning of all the promises of redemption and restoration, which he made to those who had died in an unregenerated state, and as his receiving the Sodomites into his favour appeared to be the most improbable, to prevent misconstruction, or the possibility of mistake, he has given a geographical description of both Samaria and Sodom in the 46th verse, that is, that Samaria lies on the left hand, and Sodom on the right hand, and, as if anxious to identify the very people to whom this prom-

ise of restoration is made, he describes a number of the crimes of which they had been guilty. 49. Behold this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. 50. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me; therefore I took them away as I saw good.—[Alluding to their being destroyed by fire.] In the 47th and 48th verses, he declares in the most explicit terms, and solemn manner, that the inhabitants of Jerusalem were more corrupted in all their ways, than the inhabitants of Sodom had been: yet he graciously promises in the 53d verse, When I shall bring again their captivity, the captivity of Sodom, and her daughters, and the captivity of Samaria and her daughters, then will I bring again the captivity of thy captives in the midst of them. And again in the 55th verse, When thy sister Sodom and her daughters shall return to their former estate, and Samaria and her daughters shall return to their former estate, then thou and thy daughters shall return to your former estate. 60. Nevertheless, I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. 61. Then thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed, when thou

shalt receive thy sisters, thine elder and thy younger, and I will give them unto thee for daughters, but not by thy covenant.

Now it is known, that all the inhabitants of Sodom (except Lot and his family) were consumed by fire from Heaven; yet these are the very people to whom the promise of restoration is made, for the Lord pointedly alludes to them, by hinting at the signal manner in which he took them away, as he saw good.

This is another explicit promise of posthumous restoration made to a people who, it is allowed by all, were cut off in an unregenerated state, which we believe will puzzle the greatest proficient in the art of explaining away the literal and grammatical meaning of any text, or passage of scripture, which does not accord with their established systems, to invalidate. We have heard of one clever, smart fellow, who has undertaken to invalidate this promise, by alledging that this long chapter is only a pleasant piece of raillery....that when the Lord promises in the 53d verse, that when he shall bring again the captivity of Sodom and Samaria, that he would then bring again the captivity of Jerusalem in the midst of them, he was only speaking ironically to tantalize them; but never

intended to restore either of them. When people wish to be deceived, the shadow of an argument is suffioient for the purpose.

But it is not in the Old Testament alone, nor to the posterity of Jacob in particular, nor to those who may be living at Christ's second coming, that these gracious promises are made, but also in the New Testament, to those who had been dead for ages, even the inhabitants of the antideluvian world, who had perished in the universal deluge. We are explicitly told in the 3d and 4th chapters of the first general epistle of Peter, That Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit, by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was preparing, wherein eight souls were saved by water. "Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead; for, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."*

*1 Pet. iv. 5, 6.

Had we not been acquainted with the almost invincible influence of the prejudice of an early education over the faculties of the human mind, we should have thought it almost impossible to mistake the Apostle's meaning. It is evident that he intended to inform those to whom he wrote, that Christ had once suffered for the sins of mankind, the just for the unjust, with the most merciful and benevolent design to reconcile and bring us to God....that he was put to death in the flesh, but reanimated by the spirit.... that he (Christ) when an unembodied spirit, went and preached the gospel to the spirits in prison, that is, to the spirits of the inhabitants of the old world, who, for their disobedience in the days of Noah, had been drowned in the universal deluge. And as these people (in common with the rest of mankind) were all to be accountable to him who was appointed to judge both the quick and the dead, impartial *justice* required that they should have equal advantages with those who had heard the gospel in the flesh; that is, previous to their death. This is the particular pointed reason which is given in the 6th verse, why the *gospel* should also be *preached* to them that are *dead*, to wit, that as they were accountable to the same Judge, and were to be tried by the same rule or law, they should have equal advantages with those who had

heard the gospel on earth previous to their death, or, as it is termed, in the flesh, so that they might thereby be prepared to live according to the will of God, as it is revealed by his spirit in the gospel.

People ever have been, and probably ever will be, anxious to dive into futurity, and endeavour to discover where, and how they shall be accommodated when they quit this stage of action. We shall notice only three different opinions which are entertained on this subject.

First, Those who charge the Deity with having made a partial election, by choosing some to everlasting life by an eternal, immutable decree, and reprobating others without respect to the merit or demerit of the parties; so that one class is constrained to be happy, and the other compelled to be miserable! Those of this sect fondly imagine, that the moment the soul of the elected (among which number they generally include themselves) leaves the body, it immediately wings its way to Heaven, escorted by a troop of angels; but that the soul of the reprobate is dragged off to hell by a troop of devils as their undisputed property, it having been created on purpose for this destination.

Were it possible for unbiassed reason to believe this to be a true representation of the conduct of the Deity towards the human species, first to reprobate them by an eternal decree, prior to their existence, or the possibility of their having offended him, and to send their souls immediately after death into the infernal regions, there to commence a series of unremitting tortures, which shall never end; we ask, would not this be treating an human being worse in all respects (who had not transgressed) than the devils, who are punished for actual open rebellion against their God? For we do not learn from scripture, that they are either so closely and constantly confined, or so unremittingly punished, as they suppose the souls of the reprobates are.

The following is a summary of their scheme, to wit, the Deity creates reprobates, and permits the devil to tempt them to sin; which, being an infinite evil, is so detestable to the Deity, that it excites in him *infinite anger* and displeasure against the sinner, which, in their opinion, justifies the infliction of an infinite, eternal punishment of the sinner.

If the sins committed on *earth* are infinitely displeasing to God, the sins perpetrated in *hell*

must also produce the same effect; for change of place can neither alter the nature of the crime, nor of the consequent offence. And as we conceive it to be impossible that a being continually under the influence of infinite displeasure can be happy, we must conclude, from these premises, that the devil will ultimately have the malicious pleasure of keeping the Deity in one constant, uninterrupted fit of infinite displeasure But the condition of the poor human beings, with an angry God on one hand, and a malicious devil on the other, must be truly deplorable indeed.

If the original design of this scheme had been to propagate and perpetuate sin and misery, and to stock the infernal regions with inhabitants, we should have acknowledged it to be most judiciously contrived to answer these purposes: but we are told by the Partialists, that the Deity had concerted this plan in infinite wisdom for his own *glory*. This we cannot believe, as we humbly conceive that purchasing *glory* by the eternal discomposure of the Creator, and the eternal misery of millions of his creatures, appears more like the device of fallible men, than the scheme of an infinitely merciful God. And we frankly acknowledge ourselves to be so blind, that we cannot perceive

from whence the *glory* is to be derived to compensate for the sacrifice of so much peace and happiness, and the introduction and *perpetuation* of such a deluge of *sin* and *misery*.

Secondly, Others believe that the souls of the righteous and the wicked lie dormant and insensible until the general resurrection, when they are all tried, and receive their different sentences; some to eternal life, and others to eternal damnation. These deny that Christ, after his crucifixion, went and preached the gospel to the spirits in prison, as related in the third and fourth chapters of the first general epistle of St. Peter, or that God, by the blood of Christ's covenant, has ever released any of the prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water.*

Thirdly, Some of the Universalists believe, that as Christ was sent to be the Saviour of the world, and has, in consequence, tasted death for every man, that he will not suffer any one to perish eternally, for whom he died. But as they conceive that the final sentence will not be passed on either the regenerate or unregenerate until the general judgement, except, perhaps, in a few instances, he has provided a place for

* Zech. ix. 11.

their residence, where the good may improve in knowledge and virtue, and the unregenerated placed in a salvable state, susceptible of reformation and reconciliation to their heavenly Father, by the means which will be employed by Christ for this gracious purpose; who hath already *reconciled God* to the *world;* and now *God* is in *Christ reconciling* the *world* unto himself, not *imputing* their *trespasses* unto them.*

But as curiosity is seldom satisfied while any thing remains to be discovered respecting futurity, they wish to know where this residence for departed souls may be found. This the Deity has not revealed; but that there is such a residence for the purpose, has been the opinion of almost all the nations of antiquity, and we have sufficient intimations in scripture to convince us of the real existence of such a place. In Zech. ix. 10, 11. speaking of the advantages accruing even to the heathen by the death of Christ, he says, As for thee also, whose covenant is by blood, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water.

Isaiah, in the 49th chapter, and 9th verse, represents those who are confined there, as pris-

* 2 Cor. v. 18, 19.

oners in a dark place; but shews that Christ is commissioned to release them. In the 25th, he promises that the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered.

"I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light to the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house."*

"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."†

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be *shut* up in the *prison* [or dungeon] and after many days shall they be visited."‡

* Isa. xlii. 6, 7. † Isa. lxi. 1. ‡ Isa. xxiv. 21, 22.

In a translation from the Syriac Bible, the passage reads thus: "In that very day Jehovah shall visit upon the sublime powers in the sublimity (or sublime place) and upon the earthly kings in the earth; and assemblies shall assemble over the imprisoned; and after a multitude of days they shall be *delivered.*"

It is recorded by Luke, that Christ was crucified between two malefactors, one of whom railed on him, but the other rebuked his fellow-culprit, and prayed to Christ to remember him when he came to his kingdom; and Jesus said unto him, verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

This promise was made on Friday evening, and was undoubtedly literally fulfilled, as it is most probable that the spirit or soul of Christ went immediately to preach the gospel to the spirits of the inhabitants of the old world, who, for their disobedience in the days of Noah, had been drowned in the universal deluge, and took the soul of the malefactor with him, agreeably to his promise.

We are not ignorant that some of the Partialists have contended, that by the paradise men-

* Luke xxiii. 43.

tioned here, the paradise of God in Heaven is intended. But this opinion is positively refuted by what is recorded in the 20th chapter of John, 16th and 17th verses. When Mary Magdalene went to the sepulchre on Sunday morning, and saw and conversed with Jesus, he said unto her, Touch me not, for I am not yet ascended to my Father, but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God. It is therefore as certain as testimony can render any fact, that Jesus had not been in Heaven from *Friday*, when he made the promise, until *Sunday* morning, when he conversed with Mary; and as certain that the soul of the malefactor could not have been in Heaven with him; and, in consequence, if the paradise intended was Heaven, the promise could not possibly have been fulfilled. It therefore evidently follows, that the paradise alluded to in the promise, was the paradise in Hades (whither Lazarus was conveyed by angels into Abraham's bosom) which probably consists of districts suited to the merits and acquirements of the various inhabitants; where the good may improve in knowledge and virtue, and suitable means be employed to reform the vicious.

"Here Abraham (before the death of Christ) was supposed to preside as the head of the fa-

mily of all the faithful; and, as it seems, in patriarchal honours a representative of Christ: for under his patronage it may be presumed these blessed souls had a hopeful expectation of the time of our Saviour's resurrection, when his heavenly sanctuary should be opened, and themselves received into the presence of God."*

Of this we therefore read, Luke xvi. 22, 23. That Lazarus was seen in it by the rich man, enjoying the comforts of the faithful Abraham. That in Saul or Hades there is a place of residence for happy souls, is again evident from Gen. xxxvii. 35. I shall descend unto my son mourning into Seol, Saul, or Hades. It is plain that Jacob expected to meet his son after death, since he says, I shall go down to my son: but he did not expect that his body should go down to his son's body, because his son's body having been, in his belief, devoured by beasts, was not supposed by him to be in the grave; therefore the expectation in Jacob of going to his son after death, argues that he supposed a place where the departed souls of men resided, where his son's soul then was; and where his own, when dead, should find him.

* Dr. Stonehouse.

Again, since it cannot be thought that Jacob expected either that himself, after death, should go into a state of torment, or that his son's soul was then in such a state, he must have understood by the word Saul, or Hades, some happy region, the residence of blessed souls after their bodies are deposited in the grave.

We therefore conclude, that the paradise intended in the promise was that which the Jews called Abraham's paradise, and sometimes Abraham's bosom, where Lazarus found a peaceful asylum,* and where it is probable that the soul of David remained in the days of the Apostles. See Acts ii. 34.

Upon the whole, taking both scripture and reason for our guide, we think it extremely improbable that the souls of the regenerate go immediately to Heaven, or that the souls of the unregenerate go immediately into a place of exquisite torment; but we conceive that every intelligent being must be unhappy as long as they continue to be vicious; as we conceive *misery* and *disorder* to be the natural and necessary consequence of vice.

* Luke xvi. 22.

We have every reason to believe this to be our first stage of action; and as we are sent into the world with power or faculties of mind capable of improvement, but entirely destitute of every kind and degree of knowledge. If we therefore reason from experience, which is our surest guide, we have not even the shadow of probability to induce us to believe that the Deity will furnish us with any innate or intuitive knowledge in the next, or any subsequent stage of our existence. Every being except the Deity (whose knowledge is infinite) must be contented to gain it progressively; even the *Saviour* of the *world* made his entrance into it, like other children, and gained knowledge progressively, and was thirty years old before he became a public teacher. Now as God did not furnish him with innate or intuitive knowledge, we have no reasonable ground to expect that he will furnish our minds in this way, at any future period of our existence; which, instead of being a real blessing, would deprive us of much mental happiness, as the ingenious mind is exceedingly gratified by every new discovery made by its own operations.

But if we could, even in imagination, attend the ceremony of the introduction of one of our greatest men into the court of Heaven, in pres-

ence of the great Creator and Governor of the universe, and myriads of celestial spirits, would he not feel more embarrassed, and many million times less qualified to appear there than the most ignorant savage would be to take a seat in the most learned society? Would not astonishment derange his mental faculties?.... Or would not a sense of his extreme ignorance sink him into despondency? What should we think of the conduct of a preceptor, who should transfer his pupils from the A. B. C. class, to the senior class in College? Is it not more reasonable, and more agreeable to scripture, to suppose that we shall be gradually prepared for such an astonishing scene by degrees? Christ informed his disciples, that in his Father's house there was many mansions, probably suited to the improvement made by individuals in this stage of action, and suitable provision made for their farther progress in the knowledge of future scenes, and the exercises in which they were next to be employed.

Was it for this purpose that the spirit of Christ, after his crucifixion, went and preached the gospel, that is, glad tidings to the spirits in prison, who had not heard the gospel in the flesh? And have we not the most positive pro-

mise in the 31st chapter of Jeremiah, that the Lord will teach us in such an effectual manner, that all shall know him from the least to the greatest, when he will forgive our iniquity, and remember our sin no more? And in the 37th chapter of Ezekiel, we have a very particular account of the method which our gracious Creator will take to prepare the posterity of Jacob by degrees for this glorious translation; which we wish the Partialists to read with attention; for there the Lord promises, in the most unequivocal terms, that he will raise them up out of their graves, and put his spirit into them.... replace them in their own land as one nation.... and that David shall again be their king, who will be capable to instruct them in many things relative to futurity, much better than when he presided over them formerly.

It is certain that this prophesy has not yet been fulfilled, but it will be accomplished before the commencement of the millenium, when Christ himself shall preside, and be the instructor of the human race for one thousand years, at the expiration of which period it is probable that many will be much better qualified to make their appearance in Heaven, than they would be if they were to be immediately transmitted thither, from this present stage of existence.

During an intermission of two months, in which time weakness deterred me from writing, I was favoured with the perusal of a circular letter written by the Kent and Sussex Association of Baptist Churches; who profess to maintain the important doctrine of three equal persons in the divine essence....eternal and personal election to holiness here, and eternal life hereafter....the original guilt and depravity of mankind....particular redemption....free justification by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone.... efficacious grace in regeneration....and the perseverance of the saints to eternal glory. And also of a book containing the principles and doctrines of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America. In the 60th page of which, they have undertaken to give us their doctrine or opinion of predestination, election, and reprobation. As both these schemes differ essentially from the Calvinistic hypothesis, I shall attempt to give a concise analysis of each in succession, that they may be more conveniently compared. Although much has been already said to expose the inconsistency of the Calvinistic scheme, new absurdities present themselves upon every re-examination.

Calvin defines predestination to be "the eternal decree of God, whereby he had it determin-

ed with himself what he *willed* to become of every man; for all are not created to like estate, but some to eternal life, and some to eternal damnation is fore-appointed. Therefore, as every man is created to one or other end, so we say that he is predestinate either to life or death. This counsel, as touching the elect, we say is grounded upon his free mercy, without respect to the worthiness of man. But whom he appointeth to damnation, to them by his just, indeed, and irreprehensible, but also incomprehensible judgement, the entry of life is blocked up! Now in the elect, we set vocation to be the testimony of election, and then justification to be another sign on the manifest shewing of it, till they come to glory, wherein is the fulfilling of it. But as by vocation and election God maketh his elect, so by shutting out the reprobate either from the knowledge of his name, or the sanctification of his spirit, he doth, as it were, by these marks, open what judgement abideth for them." Which, according to his scheme, would be judgement contrary to the eternal principles of both justice and mercy.

Whenever a man can be prevailed upon to abandon the use of his reason so far as to believe that a just and merciful God did ever create even one human being on purpose to damn him eter-

nally, the business is complete; he is now a true disciple, properly prepared and qualified to believe any thing. They can believe, that the decrees of God are his eternal purpose according to the council of his own *will*, whereby, for his own glory, he hath *fore-ordained* whatsoever comes to pass; rapes, robberies, murders, sodomy, and all the abominable, filthy crimes that have ever been committed by mankind. They can believe, that after the Deity had established every possible *event* by absolute immutable *decrees*, and determined the fate of every human being by the decrees of election and reprobation, he instituted a *deceptive* system of *probation* by constituting Adam the head and representative of all his posterity, and entering into a covenant with him, that on the sole condition of his abstaining from eating the forbidden fruit, the whole human race should enjoy an happy immortality; but if he transgressed, death temporal, spiritual, and eternal, should be the fate of all his posterity, who were not of the elected number. They can believe, that although every possible *event* was *fixed* and predetermined by eternal, immutable decrees, and the positive foreknowledge of God, that Adam acted as a *free*, unbiassed, moral agent, because he was entirely *ignorant* of both the *secret decree*, and the absolute prescience of God. But when Adam trans-

gressed, as they believe it was positively decreed that he should, for they positively deny that God left any thing contingent, that is, which might, or might not happen, they believe that all his posterity (who were not elected) lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever. And their preceptor Calvin says, that infants bring their damnation out of their mother's bellies! They can believe, that Christ fulfilled the law in behalf of the elect only, which are denominated his sheep, for whom alone he made an atonement, and left the goats (which he had reprobated, and consigned to the *devil* by an eternal, immutable decree, divested of all moral ability) subject to the dominion of the law of works, by which the scriptures declare, in positive terms, that no flesh shall be justified, and argue in the true Hibernian style, that although the descendants of Adam lost a power which they never had, about five or six thousand years before they were born, which might have enabled them to keep the law.

"That though man by his fall hath lost his strength to keep the law, God hath not lost his power, nor the law its force or authority. No allowance can be made or indeed given to man

to do amiss. If he fails in one point of the law, the law is broken, and charges the guilty sinner with a breach of the whole. The terms in this are always the same, *obey perfectly*, or *die eternally*."*

We behold in the above opinion, a true picture of what the Calvinists have denominated *justice*. They believe, that although our depravity and ruin originated in the decrees of God's sovereign *will*, which was compleated by the transgression of the agent which *he chose* to act for us, he is not under the least obligation, either as the Creator or Redeemer of mankind, to make any allowance for our inability, the learned and the ignorant, the wise man and the fool, the idiot, and every thing that may be called human, must *obey perfectly*, or *die eternally*. But as they believe every thing that is *wrong*, it is also necessary to constitute them truly orthodox, that they should disbelieve every thing which is *right*. They therefore disbelieve, that the grace of God, which bringeth salvation to *all men*, hath appeared.

They disbelieve, that it is the *will* of God that *all men* should be *saved*, and come unto the knowledge of the truth.†

* Baptist Association. † 1 Tim. ii. 4.

They deny, that Christ is the propitiation for the *sins* of the *whole world*.*

That Christ gave himself a *ransom* for all, to be testified in due time.†

That the Father sent the Son to be the *Saviour* of the *world*.‡

That Christ died for *all*, &c. That God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.‖

That Christ tasted *death* for *every man*. That he will *destroy* him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil. And deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**

That the Son of God will ever finally destroy the *works* of the devil.††

That Christ hath made peace through the blood of his cross, and will ever *reconcile all things* to God.‡‡

* 1 John ii. 2. † 1 Tim. ii. 6. ‡ 1 John iv. 14.
‖ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 19. ** Heb. ii. 9, 14, 15.
†† 1 John iii. 8. ‡‡ Col. i. 19, 20.

That Christ will take away the *sin* of the world.*

That the free gift came upon *all men* to the *justification* of life.†

That every knee will bow to Jesus, and every tongue confess that he is Lord.‡

That whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.‖

That Christ hath obtained eternal redemption for us.**

That Christ was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and that with his stripes we are healed. And that the Lord laid on him the iniquity of all who had *gone astray*, which includes the whole human race.††

They also deny, that it ever was the intention of Christ, after his crucifixion, to draw *all*

* John i. 29. † Rom. v. 18. ‡ Phil. ii. 10.
‖ 1 John iv. 15. ** Heb. ix. 12. †† Isa. liii. 5, 6.

men unto him, because vast numbers had been previously given to the devil by an eternal, immutable decree.*

They deny, that Christ is the *head* of *every man*.†

They acknowledge, that by the offence of Adam judgement came upon *all men* to condemnation; but positively deny, that by the righteousness of Jesus Christ the *free gift* came upon *all men* unto the justification of life ;‡ and alledge, that all men, in the first case, does mean *all men*; but in the last case, the elect only.

They positively deny, that Christ is an advocate with the Father, or a propitiation for the sins of the whole world.‖

But all these cannot excite our astonishment so much, as their positive denial of the truth of Christ's solemn promise, that if he should be lifted up from the earth, he would draw *all men* unto him.

The Father sent his Son into the world, invested with all the power in Heaven and in earth,

* John xii. 32. † 1 Cor. xi. 3. ‡ Rom. v. 18. ‖ 1 John ii. 1.

to accomplish two very important purposes, to wit, to be the *Saviour* of the world, and to *destroy* the *works* of the devil.*

But the Partialists positively deny, that he ever will accomplish either of these purposes. But there are other important purposes, for the accomplishment of which Christ was invested with extraordinary powers. He will not satisfy himself with destroying the works of the devil, but will assuredly destroy the old traitor himself.

Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil.†

He will also destroy hell, and ransom the prisoners that are confined there, and redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy *(katargeitai)* perdition and dissolution. O hell, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes.‡

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death! where is thy sting? O hell! where is thy vic-

* Mat. xxviii. 18. 1 John iv. 14, and iii. 8. † Heb. ii. 14. ‡ Hos. xiii. 14.

tory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.*

Now if hell is to be of eternal duration, and the Lord is determined never to ransom the prisoners from their confinement there, or to redeem them from the power of the second death, but to leave them in hell, to curse and blaspheme his adorable name, which is allowed by all to be a most heinous sin: and as sin is declared to be the sting of death, I query, and request a candid answer. With what propriety could the above questions be asked by one who had solemnly promised to destroy hell, to ransom the prisoners from its power, and not only to redeem them from death, but also to destroy death itself, but had fulfilled none of these promises? For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet: the last enemy shall be destroyed, which is death.†

Now if death shall ultimately be destroyed, as the *last enemy* of God and man, is it not self-evident that *evil* of every kind and degree, both physical and moral, must be previously destroyed? For otherwise it could not with truth be called the last enemy if others were still in being.

* 1 Cor. xv. 54 to 57. † 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26.

How monstrously absurd and blasphemous would it appear to every reasonable person, if any one should affirm, that God was constantly employed in producing human beings on purpose for the devil, to be tormented by him throughout eternal ages? But however shocking it may appear, this is the genuine essence of the doctrine of Calvin and his disciples, when stripped of the sophistical garb in which it has been decorated, and sent forth into the world. If they are asked what motive could have induced the Deity to create so many millions of human beings, who neither had nor could offend him before they existed, and to reprobate them by an eternal decree, they do not wish to hear any thing said about *justice* in this stage of the business; but acknowledge this to be an act of sovereign power; and argue, that as the potter has power over an insensible lump of clay, out of which to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour, so God has an indisputable right to create millions to damn them eternally, because they are conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, in consequence of Adam's fall; by which their nature and original constitution was so effectually corrupted and vitiated, that nothing less than almighty power can restore fallen nature to its pristine state: and this the Deity is by no means obliged to do,

as he had given them such a promising chance for future happiness, by choosing Adam their representative, to act for them, who unfortunately proved a traitor, by which means all their claim to future happiness was fairly lost. But when they are reminded of the eternal, immutable decree, by means of which (agreeably to their scheme) Adam was obliged to act exactly as he did, they wish to have this part of the business considered as contingent, and argue strenuously that Adam acted as a free, unbiassed agent, because he was entirely ignorant both of the secret decree and the fore-knowledge of God and their influence upon his conduct.

But were we, for argument sake, to allow that Adam was exempt from the influence of the secret decree, would this be sufficient to vindicate the moral character of God for constituting Adam the covenant-head and representative of his posterity, and putting their lives, and only chance of millions for future happiness, in trust with him, when he positively knew that Adam would transgress? And then to offer this as a good reason, why any individual of his posterity should be precluded from an interest in the covenant of grace, and the benefits to be derived from the atonement and propitiation made by Christ for the sins of the whole world, who is declared to

be the head of *every man*. Thus are vast numbers supposed to be excluded from any participation in the covenant of grace, and left subject to the covenant of *works*, perfectly divested of every necessary qualification to fulfil the law, and to work out their own salvation by the deeds thereof; although the scriptures positively declare, that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified.

It is evidently impossible to vindicate the justice of imputing the sin of Adam to his posterity on any other terms or condition, than by imputing to every individual of them fully, freely, and absolutely, the benefits purchased for all mankind by the sufferings, death, obedience, and perfect righteousness of Christ, their present glorious head; who tasted death for every man, and atoned for the iniquities of all those who had gone astray.

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. *All we*, like sheep, have *gone astray*; we have turned *every one* to his own way; and the Lord

hath laid on him the iniquity of *us all*:"* i. e. All who had gone astray, that is, the whole human race. For God hath concluded them *all* in unbelief, that he might have mercy *upon them all.*†

Universalist. As so much stress has been laid upon the doctrine of sovereign right, let us examine it candidly, to discover upon what foundation it stands.

Calvinist. Surely God as the Creator and supreme Governor of the universe, must have a *just right* to do what he pleases.

Univ. To the truth of this proposition, I most perfectly agree, but alledge, that it is impossible for any being to acquire a *just right* to do that which is *wrong.* There is an eternal, immutable difference between right and wrong, virtue and vice, and moral good and evil. They do not depend upon the *will* of any being, and therefore are of universal obligation, and cannot be abrogated or altered. And it is impossible that a God possessing infinite wisdom and goodness, should mistake their nature and tendency, and substitute the one in place of the

* Isa. liii. 4 to 7. † Rom. xi. 32.

other. Virtue and happiness are as much preferable to vice and misery, as light is to darkness, or as Heaven is to hell. It is therefore evidently impossible, that a God of infinite goodness, wisdom, and almighty power, should of *choice* establish *vice* and *misery* upon an eternal basis, in preference to *virtue* and *permanent happiness*.

Calv. But as we derived our being from God in the act of creation, does not this lay us under infinite obligations to him, and give him a sovereign right either to save or damn us, without any regard to what our future conduct might be?

Univ. By no means: for *existence* without *enjoyment*, is not a blessing, but a curse; which cannot reasonably demand any tribute of gratitude or thanks, and cannot entitle the being to inflict a second injury, because the first could not be resisted.

Calv. But God confers many temporal blessings even upon the worst reprobate; he clothes and feeds them by his bounty.

Univ. So it is said, that the Cannibals fattened their prisoners to kill and eat them. But

can you possibly imagine that any being can, by conferring a small benefit, acquire a *just* right to inflict an infinite injury? And I think it must be granted, that these temporal or temporary *favours* are small, indeed, when compared with eternal misery.

Calv. Many conjectures have been formed to account for, and vindicate the justice of, the eternal, absolute decrees of election and reprobation; but I am confident that the following was the true cause and a compleat vindication of the measure, viz. God, by means of his infinite prescience, discovered all those who would be obedient believers, and also all those who would, when created, prove incorrigible sinners. He therefore elected the first to eternal life, and sentenced the others to eternal damnation, by a decree of reprobation.

Univ. As there neither is, nor can be, any but one moral law, which is an eternal rule of right, so neither can there be any but one kind or rule of justice, which absolutely prohibits passing the sentence of death and eternal damnation upon an innocent being; and there is probably not one simpleton in existence (if not blinded by prejudice) who can suppose nonentity criminal. And to suppose that his fore-

knowledge of what they would do, if created, had provoked him to force them into existence to punish them, is to suppose him capable of *violating* every principle of *justice*, by inflicting the greatest *curse* possible, prior to the possibility of offence given, or transgression committed.

Univ. But would not his infinite prescience discover that this infinity of *guilt* and eternal *misery* might have been avoided, by omitting to create all those which he knew would prove incorrigible sinners? Is it not highly unreasonable to suppose, that God would create beings which he knew infinite wisdom and almighty power would never be able to reclaim, and place in a state of permanent happiness?

Calv. No reasonable person can doubt either his wisdom or power to render the whole human race virtuous and happy, if he had ever *wished* them that felicity. It is certain that he could reform them all with as much facility as he converted Saul, from being a most virulent persecutor, to a sincere Christian. We have never doubted his ability to save the whole human race, but we believe he never *wished* to save them *all*, because he foreknew that they would lose both their *will* and *power* to keep his law.

Univ. Is it not absurd, cruel, and even blasphemous, to stigmatize the moral character of the ever-merciful Jehovah by affirming, that he had forced into existence millions of human beings who neither had, nor could offend him, and sentenced them to eternal damnation by an immutable decree of reprobation? Or to affirm, that he caused the final fate of millions to depend upon the conduct of *one* man, which he himself had chosen to represent them, although it is acknowledged that God positively knew that he, to wit, Adam, would transgress, and consequently render millions of his posterity eternally miserable?

It certainly can afford no just cause of surprize to any person who will candidly consider the relation subsisting between cause and effect, that those who believe that Calvinism contains the genuine principles of Christianity, which represents the Deity to be the most partial, cruel, vindictive, inexorable being in existence, should renounce the Christian system and turn deists; because all which they had ever seen, felt or experienced, gave the lie direct to this infamous, atrocious calumny. And I am convinced by attentive observation, that the doctrine of the eternal, absolute, unconditional decrees of election and reprobation, were never calculated to an-

swer any good purpose, and that it has done more real injury to the Christian system, than all the other errors which have disgraced it, have ever done, as it has a natural and necessary tendency to cause all those (who do not presume that they are of the happy *few*, who have been the subjects of partial favour) to dread and hate God, as a cruel, partial being. These are the strongest pillars which support the temple of Antichrist, and as long as they remain unshaken, the devil may rest perfectly easy while his faithful sentinels on the watch-towers cry out, all's well. And this will probably be the case as long as his emissaries are successful in persuading people that God has made a partial election of a few individuals, and is the implacable enemy of all the non-elect. And at present, there is but little apparent danger of any defection or schism amongst our spiritual guides; for although they differ in trivial matters, almost every denomination of Christians, from his holiness at Rome to the truly sincere Westfieldien Methodist, inculcates the doctrine of *partial election* and *eternal damnation!* which is (gloss it as they please) an *eternal*, voluntary surrender of these very beings to the permanent dominion of the devil, who were made on purpose for him; for it is the madness of folly to suppose that God would employ any effectual means to

reclaim those who were destined to hell, by an eternal decree, before they were created.

We must at present leave the poor, unassisted reprobate to contrive some means whereby he may remove the obstacles which Calvin says God has placed in the way to block up the entry of life against him, to examine the opinion of the Baptist Association on this momentous subject. Although the opinions of the Baptist Association are, in some respects, more rational than those of some of the most rigid Calvinists, yet they have espoused some of their most capital errors.

First, By maintaining an eternal, personal election antecedent to the subsequent deceptive semblance of a state of probation, in which scheme Adam was constituted our representative to act for us, as if he, by his good conduct, could have annulled the prior arrangement established by the eternal decrees.

Secondly, In precluding all the non-elect from any participation in the covenant of grace, and leaving them totally divested of every moral principle and power, to work out their own salvation by deeds of the law of works, or more properly, in other words, to the peaceable, or

uncontested dominion of the devil, for whom they must (agreeably to this plan) have been originally created; for the scripture declares, in positive terms, that by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified; and if not justified, they cannot be saved. They affirm that Adam was constituted the head and representative of all his posterity, and prove it by quoting one half of the 18th verse of the 5th chapter to the Romans, viz. by the offence of one, judgement came upon all men to condemnation. But as they positively deny that Christ is the head of every man, they have cunningly suppressed the other half of the verse, which testifies that, even so, by the righteousness of one [i. e. Christ] the free gift came upon *all men* unto the justification of life. Should we, or rather can we repose confidence in those who are so much infatuated and pleased with the idea of a partial God, a partial Saviour, a partial redemption and restoration to the favour of God, that in order to establish these opinions, wilfully mutilate the scripture, and even divide a verse, which, when entire, fairly confutes their tenets, as it exhibits the benevolent plan of the Deity in its true light? Which was to convince the children of men, by an actual experiment, that their sole chance for happiness, both here and hereafter, depended

upon the infinite goodness, wisdom, and almighty power of God.

The devils were created free agents....they acted in a more exalted sphere, and were doubtless endowed with more excellent faculties than we are, or Adam was, and yet they transgressed and fell. Adam was created pure and innocent, and only prohibited from eating the fruit of a certain tree, but he transgressed and fell also, as God certainly knew he would; in consequence of which defection, his posterity have suffered temporary inconvenience, but not more than is absolutely necessary to teach us our entire dependance upon the head and representative of *all men*, chosen by our most merciful Father and bountiful benefactor (long before Adam was created) to be the propitiation for our sins, and to taste death for *every man*, and hath conferred the free gift upon *all men*, unto the justification of life.

But the Baptists who appear to be anxious to establish the doctrine of partial election and eternal damnation, are strenuous for excluding all those which they call non-elect, from any participation in the covenant of grace, and also from the benefits derivable by the elect, from the sufferings, death, obedience, and perfect

righteousness of Christ, who is declared to be the head of every man. They teach, that the elect are freely justified by the imputed righteousness of Christ alone; and that the non-elect are left under the judgement and condemnation of the law, compleatly divested by Adam's fall, of all moral power or capacity to keep the law; the terms in which are always the same, *obey perfectly*, or *die eternally!* And although they must allow, that these poor, forlorn wretches, have lost all moral ability to do any thing that might recommend them to the favour of God by the defection of the person whom he had chosen to represent them, yet they argue in the words following, viz. that "though man by his fall hath lost his strength to keep the law, God hath not lost his power nor the law its force or authority. No allowance can be made or indeed given to man to do amiss. If he fails but in one point of the law, the law is broken, and charges the guilty sinner with a breach of the whole."

In order to vindicate the moral character and justice of God, in making Adam a covenant-head to his posterity, and putting our lives and inheritance in trust with him to the inevitable ruin of millions, if their doctrine is true, they observe, "that some may cavil at God's ma-

king Adam a covenant-head to his posterity, and for putting our lives and inheritance in trust with him: but this, brethren, we believe is without any just cause: nay, a reflection on the wisdom and righteousness of God, could we have been in council, we judge we should have agreed to have given our high Father the honour of being our trustee."

But upon the above supposition, when the whole human race appeared on the election-ground, if the Deity had candidly told them (as he positively knew what the conduct of Adam would be) that Adam would betray the trust to which he was delegated, and that (agreeably to their opinion) many millions of them would be precluded from every benefit resulting from the covenant of grace, and be left amenable to the covenant of works, divested of every moral principle, or the power of doing any action acceptable to God, and that in consequence of this innate depravity and defect of moral ability, contracted by Adam's apostasy, many millions of them would inevitably be eternally damned, I am confident that Adam would not have gained one vote in the Baptist Association. They would much rather have been individually responsible for their own conduct, provided the sentence should have been punc-

tually executed on every one who should eat the forbidden fruit, i. e. that they should all die on the same day, people would soon shun it, as they now do the Upas tree on the Island of Java.

In the above tenets we have a true picture of Calvinistic *justice*. It matters not with them when, where, or how mankind became incapable to perform their duty; whether they lost their power before they had it, or afterwards.... whether by their own misconduct, or that of another, who was chosen by God to act for them as their representative....whether they are learned or ignorant, wise or foolish; the idiot, and every thing in the form of a man, must obey the law perfectly, or die eternally. No allowance can be made for disability. The law is perfectly good, and every breach of it, they say, deserves eternal death; which, agreeably to their hypothesis, will be inflicted upon every person who has not been elected by an eternal decree; for it would be the madness of folly to suppose that God would employ any effectual means to reclaim those who were not elected, or, as the rigid Calvinists suppose, were destined to hell long before any human being was created.

It is the opinion most generally received, that those who perish eternally, are condemned for not believing in Christ. I therefore ask, and request a candid answer, What are the non-elect to believe concerning him? Are they to believe that Christ is their Saviour? That he died for them? That he made an atonement for their sins? That he gave himself a ransom for them, to be testified in due time? That Christ tasted death for every man, and he will finally destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil? That the Son of God was manifested on purpose to destroy the works of the devil, and that he will do it effectually? That the free gift came upon all men unto the justification of life? That Christ hath obtained eternal redemption for them, and that he will intercede with his Father to pardon them?.... Certainly not; for if the opinion called orthodox be true, all the above creed must be absolutely false; and we cannot conceive that God would reward any person with eternal life and felicity for believing a lie. But if, on the contrary, they should believe that God had, by an eternal, immutable, *partial* election, chosen some to eternal life and happiness, and sentenced the remainder to death and eternal misery, by a decree of reprobation....that Christ is a *partial* Saviour, and has nothing to do with the non-elect,

but to condemn and sentence them to eternal torments at the last day, for not having observed and kept the law of God perfectly....that notwithstanding their inevitable inability, it is the *perfection* of *justice* to punish them eternally.... that God had not elected them....that Christ was not their Saviour....that he did not die for them, but for the elect only....that he had not made an atonement for their sins....that he never tasted death for them....that he never gave himself a ransom for them....that Christ will never intercede with his Father to pardon them.

This creed, according to the current hypothesis, would be orthodox. But would it entitle them to the favour of God and eternal felicity? If not, it evidently follows, that they are neither damned for their belief nor their unbelief; but because they were not elected, or rather, as the Calvinists affirm, because they were reprobated by an eternal decree....for no possible fault; for it is impossible that nonentity should transgress any law or offend any rational being. And as it is affirmed, that the decree of reprobation was *eternal*, and that the human species were created in *time*, they certainly could not offend before any of them existed. Therefore, if the above hypothesis be true, it evidently follows, that an infinite injury was decreed to be

inflicted upon them prior to the possibility of transgression committed or offence given.

If I am ever fairly convinced that God has made a partial election of a few individuals for himself, and consigned the remainder to the devil by an eternal decree of reprobation, and that Christ has made a partial atonement for the sins of the elect only, and left the greatest number to perish eternally, then shall I reverse all my former ideas of *justice*, believe in the doctrine of eternal damnation, and rank partiality as the first and most exalted of the cardinal virtues, as it was the first that appears to have been exercised towards mankind, probably millions of ages before any of them were created. This is the glorious gospel of John Calvin, that proclaims a partial God, who sends millions into the world totally incapable to do right, and damns them eternally for doing wrong!

The Methodists perceiving the egregious inconsistencies in the Calvinistic doctrine of predestination, election, and reprobation, have, in the 60th page of a book containing their principles and doctrines, endeavoured to remove what they call the greatest stumbling block about election out of the way. They appear to have divided the subject into three heads. In the first, they attempt to prove, that although

God positively knew from eternity who would be obedient believers, and those who would prove incorrigible sinners, yet he neither elected one class, nor reprobated the other, until they became actual believers or unbelievers in this life. I now ask,

First, If God positively foreknew that any man would live and die an unbeliever, could he possibly convert himself into a true believer contrary to God's fore-knowledge?

Secondly, I would also ask, and request a candid answer, What had those millions done, before they were created, to provoke the Deity to drag them into existence in the most deplorable state of ignorance and imbecility, positively knowing that the means of information which would be granted to them, would never be sufficient to convince their understandings of the truth of the propositions which they were required to believe?

Thirdly, Is it possible for a person to believe any proposition which he cannot understand?

Fourthly, Can there be any merit in pretending to believe a proposition (although it may be true) before the force of evidence has conveyed

a sufficient degree of information to the understanding to produce conviction?

Fifthly, Can a person be justly condemned for not believing a truth, the principles of which he can in no degree comprehend? If so, then all idiots are justly condemnable.

Secondly, They have proved, from scripture, the truth of their twentieth article, viz. that the offering of Christ once made, is, that perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and that there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. But as if it had been intended as an irrefragable proof, that where prejudice prevails, reason is blinded; and that truth and falsehood will never amalgamate. They have, in the third place, espoused the horrid doctrine of eternal damnation, and calmly surrender millions to the dominion of the devil, to the endless ages of eternity, for the sin of unbelief, although they profess to believe, that the offering once made by Christ is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, and that there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. If this be true, the *sin* of *unbelief* of all the world, must have been *in-*

cluded, and if included, as it must have been, if Christ *died* for *all*, and has *redeemed all*, that God laid upon Christ the iniquities of all that were gone astray ;* that he has made ample satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, amongst which *unbelief* must have been included, which they themselves have sufficiently proved ; yet, when they are asked, Why, then, are not all saved ? They answer, Because they *believe* not in the name of the only begotten Son of God. If *unbelief* be a *sin*, then are they confuted, and convicted by their own confession ; for they acknowledge that Christ made perfect satisfaction for *all* the *sins* of the *whole world*, both original and actual. If therefore Christ has once satisfied divine justice in their behalf, and redeemed them from both the curse and condemnation of the law, for what, or whose crimes, are they to be eternally damned ?

John testifies it as a matter of his own knowledge, that the Father sent the Son to be the *Saviour* of the *world*.† And Christ himself tells his disciples, that all power in Heaven and in earth, had been given unto him ;‡ so we find his commission was clear and positive, not con-

* Isaiah liii. 4, 5, 6. † 1 John iv. 14. ‡ Matthew xxviii. 18.

fined to individuals, but extended to the whole world, and his power to execute this important business omnipotent. But to our astonishment, these very people, who not only acknowledge this truth, but have taken pains to prove it, and also have inserted it as a fundamental article of their faith, that Christ has made perfect satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual, yet they persist in denying that he will ever fulfil the design or purpose of his mission, but will finally sentence numbers of these very beings to everlasting perdition, for whose sins he has made an ample atonement and satisfaction; and all this for the sin of *unbelief*, which he could remove with the greatest facility, being invested with all the powers of Heaven and earth, to enable him to accomplish three very important purposes.

First, To be the *Saviour* of the world.

Secondly, To destroy the works of the devil.*

Thirdly, To destroy the devil himself.†

Neither of these purposes will he ever accomplish, if their opinions are founded in truth, al-

* I John iii. 8. † Heb. ii. 14.

though he has made a solemn promise, that if he should be lifted up from the earth, he would draw *all men* unto him.* But if we are to believe the doctrine of the Methodists, never did any ambassador transact the business he was sent to perform, so wretchedly; for notwithstanding his being furnished with almighty powers for the salvation of the whole world of mankind, and had suffered a painful, shameful death, by which means he had ransomed and redeemed the inhabitants of the whole world, and made ample satisfaction for all their sins, both original and actual, yet they persist in believing and teaching, that many of these very beings which he had ransomed and redeemed by shedding his precious blood for the remission of their sins, will be left in possession of the enemy of God and man, to perish eternally.

Now would any rational, unprejudiced person suppose, that after they had not only acknowledged, but fairly proved, that Christ had ransomed and redeemed the inhabitants of the whole world, that they would still doubt, and continue to deny, that he would ever fulfil the solemn promise which he made a few days before his crucifixion, viz. that if he should be

* John xii. 32.

lifted up from the earth, he would draw *all men* unto him. As this promise is so pointedly contrary to the doctrine of eternal damnation, that both cannot be true; and the Methodists are free to take their choice; for either the one or the other is certainly false, and there is no door open for prevarication, but to affirm with the Calvinists, that *all men*, in these scriptures, does not mean all men, but only the elect: which the Methodists, in the 68th page, properly calls a shameless, senseless evasion.

Mr. Wesley and his adherents deserve credit for having proved, that Christ has ransomed and redeemed the whole human race. But is it not truly astonishing, that they still persist in believing and teaching that he, as Judge of the world, will, at the last day, sentence numbers of these very beings to eternal captivity in the regions of darkness, despair, and woe, which he had ransomed and redeemed by making a perfect propitiation and satisfaction for all their sins, both original and actual, as they pretend for the sin of unbelief? But I wish to be informed, to what rank or class this sin of unbelief belongs, which appears to be neither original nor actual: for these, by their own statement, have been atoned for. And we are assured that the

sins that have once been perfectly atoned for, will never be imputed again.

They represent Christ to be an incompetent, injudicious ambassador, by proving that he had paid the compleat price for the redemption of the whole human race; and, after having compleated the purchase, left great numbers of those very subjects which he had redeemed, to remain in the everlasting possession of the enemy.

Should they alledge, that the deplorable termination of this most important embassy was caused by some defect of power in Christ, this would be contrary to fact: for he told his disciples when he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the *gospel*, that is, glad tidings to every creature; that all power in Heaven and in earth had been given to him. But this calamitous termination of this most important embassy, will never be realized. The plan of God for the redemption and final salvation of all mankind, has been concerted in infinite wisdom, by infinite goodness, and has been, in its most difficult part, most compleatly accomplished, and is now progressing under the direction of an omniscient, omnipotent God and most merciful Saviour, to its most complete consummation. When every creature which is in Heaven,

and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, shall join the universal chorus, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne; and unto the lamb for ever and ever:* *(eis tos aionas ton aionon)* i. e. to the ages of ages.

Mr. Wesley conceived he had removed the great stumbling block out of the way, concerning the doctrine of election, by relinquishing the most absurd part of the Calvinistic hypothesis, which fairly constitutes God the author of sin, by charging him with having decreed whatsoever comes to pass; all the wicked, abominable, filthy, nasty, detestable crimes that ever have or ever will be committed, are included in these few words, *whatsoever comes to pass.*

But although his hypothesis does not impute the sins of men to the decrees or agency of God, yet he charges him with acts of injustice and cruelty, of which no good being could be guilty, viz. forcing millions into existence who had not offended him, and who could suffer no possible injury as nonentities, positively knowing that after this life, they should be precluded from

* Rev. v. 13.

every kind and degree of enjoyment, and be subjected to every degree of misery throughout eternal ages.

Mr. Wesley probably omitted quoting the most cogent text in the New Testament, to evince that Christ died for *all men*, because it proves more than he was willing to grant. They are the words of Christ predicting his crucifixion, and the beneficial effects of it to all mankind, John xii. 32. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, *will draw all men* unto *me*. This text is so pointedly repugnant to the doctrine of eternal damnation, that if one be *true*, the other must be *false*. Christ has been lifted up from the earth according to his prediction, and if he should fulfil his solemn promise by drawing *all men* unto him, there will be none left for the devil, unless he should prove to be strongest, and draw them back again. But for our consolation, Christ tells us in John x. 28, 29. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father which gave them to me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. So here we find clearly, that he has solemnly promised to *draw all men unto* him, and to give them eternal life; and assures us, that both himself and his Father is

so much engaged to protect them by his omnipotent arm, that none shall be able to pluck them out of his hand.

Is it not fairly presumable that the Methodists have omitted to quote, to avoid the necessity of being obliged to join with the Calvinists in affirming that *pantas anthropous*, in Greek, and *all men*, in English, does not mean *all men*, but only a few individuals, who had been partially elected? For the Partialists wish not to relinquish this favourite doctrine of eternal damnation, by which means they can,

> With heaven's own thunders shake the world below,
> And play the God an engine on the foe. POPE.

And as they profess to believe, that the final fate of every individual is immutably fixed and determined by the decrees, or absolute fore-knowledge of God, they probably conclude, that although this doctrine cannot alter the destined fate of any person, it might operate greatly in favour of the elect, by restraining the reprobates from many acts of enormity, by which the saints might be molested. For certainly they cannot seriously believe, that their preaching and praying can, or will induce the Deity to alter or reverse any thing that has been fixed and deter-

mined upon, in the councils of Heaven, long before man was created. But as some respect is due to the moral character of the Deity, ought they not to pause and re-examine this hypothesis, and ask themselves this serious question, viz. Would not any man be called a blasphemer who should assert, that the Deity was almost constantly employed in creating human souls on purpose for the devil? It is in vain to evade or quibble....God certainly had some design in creating them, which, if he acts agreeably to his own nature, must be a good, just, and merciful design, which never could have induced him to create even one soul on purpose for the devil. But if it is denied, that he has created any for this purpose, I ask, how, then, does it happen, that the devil captivates and retains so many souls contrary to the purpose of the Deity?

Answer, Because they would not believe in Christ, and thereby qualify themselves for fit inhabitants of Heaven; they live and die in an unregenerated state; it is therefore just to send them to the prison of hell eternally.

Question, Whether is regeneration the proper work of God or man? Or, in other words, whether it is the operation of the spirit of God act-

ing upon the soul of man, or the operation of the soul of man acting upon itself?

A. It is clearly the operation of the spirit of God acting upon the soul of man; but man should be aiding and assisting in the operation, to the utmost of his ability.

Q. I presume you mean, that he should add a little of his *goodness* and *power* to the infinite goodness and almighty power of God, without which the work cannot be compleated? But where is he to obtain this wisdom and power which you call *his?* Is not God the source and fountain of all wisdom, goodness, and power? There is no other source from whence they can be derived; and if he does not communicate wisdom, goodness, and power to his creatures, how or where are they to acquire it? Or for what are they accountable? And if these gifts are bestowed in such a penurious manner as not to answer the purpose, can those who are supposed to be completely divested of every moral qualification make up the deficiency? If, then, the means are denied that would be indispensably necessary to enable them to put themselves into a salvable state, or to make up the deficiency of God's grace, how can they, with justice, be eternally damned?

Mr. Wesley plainly perceiving the palpable absurdity of supposing it possible that a God of infinite goodness, justice, and mercy, should sentence millions of beings which he had determined to create at some future period to endless misery, by an eternal, immutable decree of reprobation, and ardently wishing to defend the moral character of the Deity against such an injurious imputation, he has endeavoured to qualify the doctrine, by alledging, that although God infallibly knew all those who should be finally happy, and all those who would be finally miserable, if created, yet he neither elected any one to eternal life, nor sentenced any one to eternal damnation, by a decree of reprobation, until, in time, when they became actual *believers* or *unbelievers*. This hypothesis has apparently more the semblance of justice than the other; but when critically examined, it will be found equally fallacious.

It is certain, that no human being can possibly, by the energy of their own unassisted powers, *avoid* or *escape* from a fate, which the Deity infallibly knew would be their everlasting portion, nor can we suppose it either probable or possible, that God would employ any effectual means to convince, convert, and reclaim any person whom he infallibly knew would finally be

eternally damned. If not, could it be either just or merciful, to drag them into existence to inflict upon them the worst curse possible, even the curse of eternal damnation, before it was possible for them to offend him? And it certainly requires no logical arguments to prove, that nonentity could neither transgress any law, nor offend any rational being.

Is it not therefore evident, that the Partialists of every denomination, who inculcate the doctrine of eternal damnation, charge God with a premeditated act of injustice and cruelty?

If this horrid doctrine be true, I can perceive no possible way by which the moral character of God can be vindicated, but by proving that he is deficient either in wisdom or power, or both; for, to alledge that he is deficient in *good will* towards the beings whom he hath created, would be fixing a stigma, instead of framing an apology.

As it is impossible that the human species, or any individual of them, could have offended the Deity before they existed, and as he has brought them into being without their knowledge or consent, in a state of extreme ignorance and imbecility, subjected to innumerable

temptations, and millions of them left to live, and die without instruction respecting their duty either to God or man, it is evidently incompatible with the attributes of the Deity to sentence any of them to eternal damnation, until he has first employed every possible means to reclaim them. Is it not reasonable to believe, that Christ, who tasted a bitter, painful death for every man, will persevere until he has compleated the work which he has began? But were it possible that there should *even one* be found, so obstinately perverse, that infinite wisdom aided by almighty power, could not reclaim, would it not be more merciful to blot him out of existence, than to subject him to eternal torments? Why should a civilized people persist so obstinately in exhibiting the Deity as the patron of savage cruelty and vindictive vengeance? I am confident that the salvation of mankind has always depended, and will forever depend, upon the infinite goodness, wisdom, and almighty power of our most merciful Creator, and best benefactor, and not upon any goodness, wisdom, or power that has ever been communicated to man. I am also confident, that the Deity never created even one soul on purpose for the devil; and as confident, that he never will permit the devil to retain one soul contrary to his purpose. I am also firmly persuaded, that the Deity will

persevere in the use of means, until he has established every human being in a condition vastly preferable to a state of non-existence. If this had not been his design, he never would have created them.

I have frequently been opposed with the following questions, viz. If the Deity is really as benevolent and impartial as you suppose him to be, why has he permitted so much evil and misery in the world as we daily see and experience? And why are his favours dispensed with so much partiality, that one man lives in splendour, ease, and affluence, and his neighbour, apparently a much better man than him, living despised in abject poverty and real misery?

To which I have answered, that our most gracious Father has placed us here at school, to gain an experimental knowledge of the nature and tendencies of right and wrong, good and evil, virtue and vice, which would be as difficult to attain by theory, as for the Collegian, who had narrowly escaped being drowned, had made a solemn resolution never to go into the water again until he had first learned to be an expert swimmer.

We judge of every thing by experience, which is our only certain guide; and our enjoyments are greatly enhanced by contrasting the various scenes through which we have passed, of pleasure and pain, sickness and health, prosperity and adversity, the smiles of friends, and the frowns of enemies, freedom and captivity, and of vice, and misery its natural and necessary consequence, contrasted with virtue, and happiness its certain reward.

When the penalty of disobedience was announced to Adam, viz. in the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die; he would naturally enquire, what is death? Suppose, then, the Deity to give him an idea of the meaning of the word death, should cause some animal to expire before him, groaning bitterly, in the most convulsive agonies, would he not ask, What causes it to make that disagreeable noise? Why does it struggle and twitch so violently? Because it is in great pain. Pain! What is pain? Here the theoretic lesson must end, and master experience commences teacher, and applies a good rod to his naked back, and tells him to remember, that the sensation produced in his back, by the application of the whip, is what we mean by the word pain. This I shall doubtless remember. But pray tell me, was not the pain in the

whip before it was communicated to my back? O no, the whip is dead....it cannot feel. What, had the whip the same kind of life that I have? No, it only had what is termed vegetable life, and never had the sense of feeling. Can it be possible that Adam was so ignorant? He certainly was, unless the Deity had vouchsafed to furnish him with innate or intuitive knowledge: which I conceive he has never yet done, and which I firmly believe he never will do.

He has created us with powers and faculties susceptible of improvement, but perfectly destitute of knowledge. Therefore every being who is not possessed of infinite knowledge, must be contented to gain it progressively by experience, and judge of the nature and qualities of good and evil, pain and pleasure, and happiness and misery, by contrasting them.

If Adam had been as sagacious as some people would wish us to believe, he would have known, or strongly suspected, that the devil in the form of a snake, had been tampering with his rib.

If Adam was so very ignorant, was it not extremely cruel to appoint him our head and representative, and impute the guilt of his disobe-

dience to his posterity, when it is acknowledged that God positively knew that he would transgress, and subject millions of his descendants to innumerable evils? By no means. The supposed injustice and cruelty originates in the errors of those, who assert that God had, in the first place, made a partial election of a certain number, prior to this scheme of probation, by which device he had contrived to divest all mankind of every moral principle, and both the *will* and *power* of doing any thing acceptable to God. That he then sent Christ to be the Saviour of the elect only, for whose sins he has made an ample atonement, and left millions of non-elect, or reprobates, loaded with the imputed guilt of Adam's transgression, in the most polluted state of depravity....totally excluded from any participation in the covenant of grace, and the redemption purchased by Christ for the elect.... unassisted by the spirit of God....with the entrance of life blocked up against them. And being thus completely divested of inclination and power, either to will or to do any good, they are still supposed to be amenable to the law of works, whose conditions, they say, are, *obey perfectly*, or *die eternally!* Nor can our disqualification by the above contrivance, exempt us from any part of duty, or screen us from the punishment denounced against the transgressor. Be-

cause, say they, you had sufficient power given to you in Adam your representative, chosen by God to act for you; which power you lost fairly. It is therefore perfectly *just* to exclude you from every benefit resulting from the covenant of grace, which was purchased for the elect only, by the death, sufferings, and perfect righteousness of Christ, who died for the elect alone; and not for every man, as some erroneously suppose. The Baptist Association argue, "That though man by his fall has lost his strength to keep the law, God hath not lost his power, nor the law its force or authority. No allowance can be made or indeed given to man to do amiss. If he fails but in one point of the law, the law is broken, and charges the guilty sinner with a breach of the whole. The terms in this are always the same, *obey perfectly*, or *die eternally*." If the posterity of Adam was deprived of any power or propensity, which was necessary to enable them to keep the law of God, either by a secret, eternal decree, or by the defection of Adam, it must be acknowledged, even by the Partialists themselves, that it never was in the power of these unfortunate, devoted victims, to prevent either the eternal decree of reprobation, or Adam's transgression. It is therefore evident, that it could not have been their own fault, but a most deplorable misfortune. It is also ev-

ident, that they must entertain very preposterous ideas of right and wrong, who can conceive it to be consistent with the eternal rules of *justice*, and the glorious attributes of the supreme Judge of the universe, to subject millions to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever, for submitting to an inevitable misfortune, which they never had power to prevent or avoid.

Although the moral law, which is the law of nature, and of nature's God, is eternal, unchangeable, and of universal obligation; yet it must appear evident to every unprejudiced, reflecting mind, that the obligation to obey and fulfil all its precepts, must vary in exact proportion to their respective capacities to understand, and powers to fulfil, the duties incumbent on each individual, according to their various stations in the great scale of existence.

If this statement be correct, it follows, that as God is possessed of infinite wisdom to discern, and infinite power to execute, he must have made this law the invariable rule of his conduct, throughout the extended universe. It is therefore evident that they err most egregiously, who imagine they do honour to the Deity by alledging, that he has a sovereign right to deviate

from this eternal standard of equal, impartial justice, and substitute arbitrary will and pleasure in place thereof. On this erroneous, detestable principle they found their opinion, that God has a sovereign right to create millions of human beings, under an eternal decree of reprobation, and afterwards to institute a deceptive scheme of probation, by appointing a known traitor to be their representative, thereby to divest them of all moral power and capacity to fulfil the precepts of the moral law, which is founded upon the eternal principles of rectitude, according to the relation and fitness of things, and then to damn them eternally for their depravity and incapacity; or, in other words, for not doing that which required powers of which they were purposely deprived before they were created.

If we may be permitted to judge from the whole tenour of their doctrine, the Partialists suppose that a being has a right to transgress the eternal laws of nature, in proportion to the degree of power and dignity which they possess; otherwise how can they conceive, that because God is possessed of infinite power and dignity, he has a just right to send millions of human beings into the world, divested of moral rectitude and power, and reprobated by an eternal

decree, and sunk into the depths of depravity, by an abortive scheme of probation, and then to damn them eternally because they could not atone for their original guilt or actual transgression. Nor can they keep the law of God perfectly, which requires the most perfect obedience ; and in this deplorable, helpless condition, are they supposed to be left, obnoxious to the wrath and curse of the God that made them, both in this life and that which is to come. And Christ (by their scheme) is supposed to be concerned for the elect only, which they denominate his sheep. And the non-elect, or reprobates, are goats, which were consigned to the devil by an eternal, immutable decree of reprobation.

There is no other denomination of Christians who contend so strenuously, that it is perfectly consistent with the unerring rules of *justice* to punish a reprobate eternally for not obeying and keeping the laws of God perfectly ; and none are more ready to acknowledge their entire inability to do it. They teach their children in their Catechism, that no mere man since the fall of Adam, has been able to obey and keep the commands of God. But when they are told that it would be repugnant to every idea of justice to punish human beings eternally for not

performing duties which their Maker had never furnished them with abilities to perform, they immediately reply, you had ample power given to you in Adam, which you and all his posterity lost by his fall. But if their own doctrine be true, this assertion must be absolutely false, that Adam was ever invested with sufficient powers to obey and fulfil the commands of God; for if God had, by an eternal decree, "foreordained whatsoever should come to pass," he certainly decreed every action of Adam's life, together with all the crimes and abominations that ever have, or ever shall come to pass. And if this was the case, it was impossible for Adam to abstain from eating the forbidden fruit. Therefore the absolute necessity which impelled him to fulfil the decree, rendered it impossible for him to obey the command, as they were in diametrical opposition to each other. It is therefore demonstrably evident, that there cannot be a more flagitious absurdity than to affirm, that God had ever placed mankind in such an horrid dilemma, that by fulfilling the decree (which was unavoidable) he should lose communion with God, incur his wrath and curse, and so be made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever! And by disobeying the command, to entail certain

death and eternal misery upon millions of his unborn, innocent posterity!

Having, as I suppose, sufficiently exposed the enormity of a doctrine so very derogatory to the moral character of the Deity, and so highly injurious to mankind (it being to my certain knowledge, the prolific parent of deism and infidelity) I shall now proceed to investigate and explain some of the causes of these errors, especially as those which are most prolific, are the most concealed from observation or detection. I mean, in the first place, the great difficulty the Apostles must have experienced, arising from the deficiency of appropriate terms in the Greek language, to express or convey many ideas contained in the Christian system of theology, that had never entered into the mind of a Grecian.

And secondly, the difficulty of translating new coined terms, or circumlocutive language; for, when we allow that the original authors were inspired, we are certain that the translators were not. And I am confident that if the experiment should be made, by taking six lads of the most different religious persuasions, and let them study the Greek language, and the principles of their various discordant professions, under the direction of their most able Ministers,

until they were thirty years old, and then set them separately to translate the New Testament from six of the oldest Grecian copies, into English, every one of the translations would differ from the other. Of the truth of this allegation, we require no better evidence than to attend to the various discordant explanations given to the same passages of scripture in the English translation of the New Testament, by good English scholars of different persuasions; they will try to bend the text to make it accord with their own principles; but where this cannot be done, they will contrive, by every possible means, to explain away its plain, literal, grammatical sense, by giving it a spiritual, or figurative, or metaphorical, or parabolical, or synecdochal meaning, or, indeed, any meaning but the right one. This last trope is very useful to them, by which the whole is put for a part, or a part for the whole: for when John tells his disciples that Christ was the lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world. And again, that he is the propitiation for the sins of the *whole* world.... that the Father sent the Son to be the *Saviour* of the world....that Christ is the *head* of every man....that he gave himself a *ransom* for *all*.... that he *tasted death* for *every man*....that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself....that Christ died for all....that the free gift

came upon all men to the justification of life.... that every knee shall bow to Jesus, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God....that he concluded all in unbelief, that he might have *mercy* upon all....that Christ promised that if he should be lifted up from the earth, he would draw *all men* unto him, even all that are in Heaven, and that are on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, and all that are in them, shall unite with one voice in ascribing blessing, and honour, and glory, and power unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the lamb forever and ever: The Partialists insist that these gracious promises which are made to the *whole world*, to every man, to all men, to every creature, that every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that all that are in Heaven, and all that are on the earth, and under the earth, and all that are in the sea, should be expounded synecdochally, to mean but a very small part, and not the whole: for

> Synecdoche the whole for part doth take,
> Or part for whole, just for the metre's sake.

But if the use of such vague, indeterminate language be allowable in communicating our ideas in rhyme, on some light, trivial subject, it certainly cannot afford a laudable precedent

for delivering the sacred truths of the gospel, in prose, in the same vague style.

But when they find themselves hard pressed to defend their favourite doctrine of eternal damnation, which they call the gospel, that is, *glad tidings* to *all men*, they endeavour to collect as many texts to set in array against both scripture and common sense, as they can find; many of which have been fabricated out of a false translation of the Greek word *aion*, which properly signifies an age, but which they have made to convey very opposite ideas from what is contained in the original, as I shall endeavour to prove by some extracts taken from a book written by Doctor Stonehouse, in England, who appears, by his works, to have possessed a critical knowledge of the Hebrew, Greek, Syriac, and Latin languages. It is written in letters (to a person who was also a good linguist;) in which he has detected and exposed the errors in the common translations, both in the Old and New Testaments; from which false translations many of these erroneous doctrines have originated, and have since been maintained, especially by the false translation of the word *olem* in Hebrew, and the word *aion* in Greek. And I have discovered but one place, viz. Ephesians ii. 7. where the words *aion*, or *aionios*, has been truly

rendered, to wit, that in the *ages* to come, &c. They saw that it would be absurd to render it, that in the *eternities* to come, &c. neither would it accord with their principles to say, that in the world or *worlds* to come: they were therefore obliged, for once, to translate it properly.

But before I begin to recite the demonstrative arguments of Dr. Stonehouse, I shall endeavour to point out some of the almost invincible difficulties which both the Apostles and translators had to encounter. It is well known that every science must have many peculiar technical terms, without which one person cannot communicate their ideas clearly to another. When Christianity was first promulgated, there was nothing similar to many of its institutions and doctrines to be found, either in the Jewish theology, or Grecian mythology; and therefore there could not have been a sufficient number of precise words in the Greek language, whereby the Apostles could convey their ideas clearly, even to a native Grecian; for it would be preposterous to imagine, that any people would have coined words to represent ideas which had never entered into their minds. It is therefore evident, that the Apostles who wrote in Greek, must either have coined *new words* to convey new ideas, or made use of circumlocutive lan-

guage to explain their meaning. In consequence of which, those who translated the New Testament from the original Greek, into English, could gain no etymological information by perusing the works of the celebrated Grecian authors, who were Heathen, as they had no language to express many of the ideas in the Christian system. The translators, therefore, have used the same word to express ideas and things that are essentially different, and frequently, either through ignorance or design, to mistake the meaning of the Greek word entirely, as Dr. Stonehouse has demonstrated they have done with the words *aion* and *aionios*, which in many places they have construed eternal, everlasting, for ever and ever. And in many other places, where this construction would be absurd, they have rendered the same word *world*. And every person of common sense can easily perceive, that *eternity* and the *world*, has as little etymological affinity as time has to a saw-mill.

The title of the fragment of the Reverend Dr. Stonehouse's book, that is now before me, is Universal Restitution, &c.

LETTER 1. *That the English words eternal, everlasting, for ever and ever,* &c. *are unscriptural, and express not the true import of the original words* aion, aeon, olem.

TO .....

SIR,

What I have to advance upon this great truth, the restitution of all things, will be drawn, mostly, from two considerations, *first*, From a consideration of the kingdom of God to be established by divine management in the person of the God-man, Christ Jesus: and *secondly*, From a consideration of the present fallen nature and disposition of the creature, but more immediately of the human soul. These two points will divide my enquiries into two parts, the first of which will respect the kingdom of God. But as preliminary thereto, I must begin with what I take to be the true import of the words *olem* and *aion aeon*, the foundation of the mistake I have so often complained of.

Sect. I. *The word* olem, *its meaning and force.*

The word *olem* (or *owlem*) which the Septuagint translate (wherever it respects time) by the Greek word *aion* (and which translation seems to have been the occasion of the frequent use of the word *aion* afterwards among the

Greek Christians) it is well known, is usually in our Old, as is also the word *aion* in our New Testament, rendered by the English words eternal, everlasting, and without end; but how justly is the question in debate.

The word *olem*, among the Hebrews, signified, as a verb, to hide, to conceal, to reserve in darkness and secrecy; as a noun, uncertain, indefinite, undetermined, undeclared, and, consequently, applied to a person, it means an uncertain, indeterminate person; and applied to time (its only use which at present concerns us) an indefinite, undeclared, though very long time.

The word *aion*, among the Greeks, signified, in its genuine meaning, an age, or so long as very old men live, a term of about 100 years; yet sometimes the Greeks applied it to a much longer term than an hundred years, and sometimes to a shorter term; so that the word *aion* corresponds tolerably with the word *olem* in its use, though not in its natural import; for though *aion, aeon*, signifies not as *olem*, hidden, covered, concealed, indefinite, unascertained; yet, as applied to time, it denotes what is very like this, a long though undetermined portion or period of time.

Aion signifies the space of 100 years, though the destruction of the Jews foretold, Mat. xiii. 40. *(en te sunteleia to aionos)* came to pass before 50 years.

Sect. II. *The word* aion *means not eternity.*

However that the words *aion, aeon,* even in the scripture acceptation of it, cannot signify what we moderns mean by the word eternity, will appear for the following reasons:

First, Because such meaning of it is, in many instances, repugnant to other parts of scripture; so, 2 Cor. iv. 4. In whom the God (*to aionos toto*) of this *aeon* has blinded the minds of them that believe not, &c. Now, supposing the word *aeon* to mean age, and not eternity, satan may here be aptly exhibited to us in this grand and horrible description of him, the God of this age, or *aeon;* but it were blasphemy to call him the God of eternity; besides the absurdity of styling him the God of *this* eternity; for the word *this,* so used, must imply some other eternity besides the present; and two eternities are an inconsistency in terms. Again, Ephesians v. 12. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers of the darkness (*to aionos toto*) of this *aeon.* But translate the word *aeon* here *eternity,* and this pas-

sage would be, against the rulers of the darkness of this eternity. So 1 Cor. i. 20. Where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer (*to aionos toto*) of this *aeon*, and not of this eternity. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Charge them that are rich (*en to nun aioni*) in the now *aeon* age, and not in the now eternity, that they be not high minded, &c. So Tim. ii. 12. That denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly (*en to nun aioni*) in the now *aeon*. So Mat. xiii. 22. The seed among the thorns is, he that heareth the word and the care (*to aionos toto*) of this *aeon* age (not of this eternity) and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful, &c. For what common sense can endure that the word *aion aeon*, in these places, should be thus rendered by the word eternity?

Secondly, That the word *aion* does not signify eternity, is also clear, because there was a time before *aion aeon* was, yea, before the *aeons* plural were; e. g. Acts xv. 18. Known unto God are all his works (*ap aionos*) since the *aeon*; i. e. the great, comprehensive *oeon* began. Acts iii. 21. Spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets (*ap aionos*) since the *aeon* began. John ix. 32. (*ek to aionos*) since the *aeon* began was it not heard that, &c. And in the same sense

are used *aeons*, ages in the plural number: e. g. 1 Cor. ii. 7. The hidden mystery of God pre-ordained unto his glory *(pro ton aionon)* before the *aeons* began, which none of the princes *(to aionos toto)* of this *aeon* knew. Eph. iii. 9. The mystery which has been hid in God *(apo ton aionon)* from the beginning of the *aeons*. Col. i. 26. The mystery that has been hid *(apo ton aionon ki apo ton geneon)* from the *aeons* and the generations, but now is made manifest unto his saints.

Thirdly, It is evident again, that the word *aeon* cannot signify eternity, because there are more *aeons* than one; whereas eternity, everlastingness, and forever, must be an individual, as implying an unity of consistence, and simple continuance. Luke xx. 34. And Jesus said unto them, the children *(to aionos toto)* of this *aeon*, marry and are given in marriage, but they who shall be accounted worthy to obtain (*to aionos ekeino*) that other *aeon*, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, &c.

Here we find *this* and *that*, and consequently two *aeons*, a distinction observable in many parts of scripture; so 1 Cor. ii. 6. Yet not the wisdom (*toaionos toto*) of this *aeon* which comes to nought. Rom. xii. 2. Be not conformed to (*to aioni toto*)

this *aeon*. And in a like distinguishing sense we often find mentioned the cares, the wisdom, the men, the things, the children (*to aionos toto*) of this *aeon*; all which imply, that there must be some other *aeon* beside the present, and consequently more *aeons* than one.

Fourthly, That the word *aeon* cannot mean eternity is evident yet farther, because there are not only more *aeons* than one, but these *aeons* succeed one the other, as the links of a chain, the one beginning where the other ends: e. g. Mat. xii. 32. But whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him (*en toto to aioni*) in this *aeon* (*oute en to meleonti*) nor in that to come. Eph. i. 21. And set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only (*en to aioni tota*) in this *aeon*, but also in that which is to come. Gal. i. 4. Who gave himself for our sins, that he might seize us (*ek to enestotos aionos ponero*) out of this present wicked *aeon*. Eph. ii. 7. That (*en tois aiosi tois epherchomenois*) in the *aeons* to come, he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace. So 2 Tim. iv. 10. Demas is said to have forsaken Paul because of his love to the present *aeon*. Whereas Christians are described, Heb. vi. 4, 5.

such as have tasted of the heavenly gift, and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the power (or virtue) of the *æon* to come.

The present *æon*, therefore, as it began, so will it also end; and in its end be succeeded by an *æon* to unfold itself in a most essential difference and dissimilitude from the past.

Fifthly, From hence also it appears again, that the word *æon* (aion) cannot mean eternity, because it must end and be no more; of which we have further assurance, Mat. xxviii. 20. And lo I am with you (*pasas tas hemeras*) all the days, even to the end (*to aionos*) of the *æon*. Mat. xiii. 29. The harvest is the end (*to aionos*) of the *æon*: v. 40. So shall it be in the end (*to aionos toto*) of this *æon*.

Sixthly, And not only *æon* singly and indefinitely, but (*oi aiones*) the *æons* plural, shall also have an end. Heb. ix. 26. But now once about (or towards) the conclusion (or closing up together) of the *æons* (*epi sunteleia ton aionon*) he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 1 Cor. x. 11. And they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends (*ton aionon*) of the *æons* are come; and not the ends of the

eternities. Neither can the words *ton aionon* signify the world, for the term *aion*, in scripture, is no substitute for the term *kosmos*, world.

The translators of our New Testament, sensible of the absurdity that would ensue from construing the word *aion* in many places eternal, have, in various instances, substituted the noun *world*, instead of the verb *eternal*, viz. the rulers of this (*aion*) world, the disputers of this (*aion*) world, the riches of the present (*aion*) world, &c. but without reaching the intention of the scripture; for it is the age, and not the world which the scripture every where complains of. The worldly inhabitants of the present age are wicked, but the worldly inhabitants of a future age shall be righteous. The ruler of darkness in (i. e. the dark ruler of) this age, is satan, the ruler of a succeeding age, even upon this world of ours, will be Jesus Christ. So that the cares of this *æon*, are the cares of the people of this age; and a conformity to this *æon*, is a conformity to the people of this age, &c. And *eis ton aiona*, though it may be rendered physiologically as long as the world stands, yet, in its true force, it means as long as the age (that is, the great age of wickedness, which comprehends many other lesser ages of the same kind) endures. This world will weather out many ages,

and that not only ages of rebellion, but also ages of godliness and peace.

To suppose, therefore, the word *aion æon*, age, to be equivocal with the word *kosmos*, world, is, without further proof, unreasonable. But, besides this, and besides that, we have no precedent for translating it so, out of any of the Greek heathen authors, whose works are transmitted down to our times. This way of translating the word will also make many scripture passages more than absurd, even arrant nonsense, as the few following examples, which have very many like them, will demonstrate. The term *aion*, then, being translated world, the subsequent texts will be translated as follows: Mat. vi. 13. Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory (*eis tos aionas*) to the worlds. John vi. 15. He that eateth of this bread shall live (*eis ton aiona*) to the world. Chapter xi. 26. He shall not die (*eis ton aiona*) to the world. Heb. xiii. 8. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day (*kai eis tos aionas*) and to the worlds. Rom. xiv. 11. The smoke of their torments ascendeth up (*eis aiona aionon*) to a world of worlds. Heb. xiii. 20. The God of peace, who, through the blood (*diathekes aionion*) of the worldly covenant. Mat. xix. 16. The rich man says to our Lord what shall I do to have (*zoen aionion*) worldly

life? 1 Tim. vi. 12. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on (*aionio zoes*) worldly life. John xii. 25. He that hateth his life (*en to kosmo toto*) in this world, shall keep it (*eis zoen aionion*) to worldly life. Rom. xvi. 26. According to the commandment (*to aionio theo*) of the worldly God. Heb. ix. 14. Christ who (*dia pneumatos aionio*) through the worldly spirit offered himself to God, &c.

But what common sense will admit of the strange impertinence of the above translations of the terms *aion, aionios?* So that, unless we claim a like use for the word *æon*, as is related of a nose of wax, which its owner could convert and transform at pleasure, its vulgar translations, namely, *world, eternal*, &c. must be renounced.

Æon, see Encyclopædia Britannica.

Æon, a Greek word properly signifying the age or duration of any thing.

Æon, among the followers of Plato, was used to signify any virtue, attribute, or perfection: hence they represented the Deity as an assemblage of all possible *æons*; and called him *pleroma*; a Greek word signifying fulness.

The Valentinians, who, in the first ages of the Church, blended the conceits of the Jewish Cabalists, the Platonists, and the Chaldean philosophers, with the simplicity of the Christian doctrine, invented a kind of theogony or genealogy of Gods (not unlike that of Hesiod) whom they called by several glorious names, and all by the general appellation of *æons*; among which they reckoned *zoe*, life; *logos*, word; *monogones*, only begotten; *pleroma*, fulness; and many other divine powers and emanations, amounting in number to thirty; which they fancied to be successively derived from one another; and all from one self-originated Deity, named *Bythus*, i. e. profound or unfathomable, whom they called likewise the most high and ineffable Father.

This word *æon* is of inestimable value to the Partialists, on account of its protean qualities. It is perhaps the most pliable, accommodating word that can be found in any language. But it appears to be rather too vague to found a doctrine upon, which traduces the moral character of God, and contradicts the most clear and important doctrines which are taught in the New Testament. The scriptures proclaim, that Christ gave himself a ransom for *all*, to be testified in due time....that he tasted death for

every man....that he hath obtained (*aionion*) redemption for us....that he, Christ, was sent by his Father to be the Saviour (or restorer) of the world. John xiii. 3. Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, &c. Mat. xxviii. 18. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in Heaven and on earth. By all these passages, and very many more that might be enumerated, it is evident, that the Father had given all things into the hands of his Son, and invested him with ample powers to be the Saviour or restorer of the world, and to destroy the works of the devil. And he promises, in the most explicit terms, shortly before his crucifixion, that if he should be lifted up from the earth, he would *draw all men* unto him. But by a false translation of this equivocal word *æon*, they have been enabled to propagate a doctrine highly derogatory to the moral character of God, and extremely injurious to mankind. They affirm, instead of Christ's exerting these extraordinary powers to reconcile the world to his Father, and restore them to his favour, and to destroy the works of the devil, he will select a few individuals, which he will assist by his efficacious, irresistible grace, and abandon the remainder to the peaceable dominion of the devil; so that, instead of destroying the works of the devil, which are allowed by

all to be sin and misery (for the sting of death is sin) he will (if their doctrine be true) establish the kingdom of the devil upon a basis equally permanent with that of his Father. This is their glorious consummation of all things, when some few may sing in Heaven the praises of a partial Saviour, and the remainder howl in hell, cursing the only being who could have saved them, but would not. And the best apology they can make for the tragical termination of this all-important affair, is, that they did not believe in Christ....that they would not come to him that they might be saved. But I beg leave to ask these apologists, *first*, Did ever any person believe any proposition whatever until the force of evidence produced conviction? *Secondly*, Is it possible for a person to disbelieve a proposition, after adequate evidence has produced conviction of its truth? *Thirdly*, Are we not explicitly told, that Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost? And we are also told by Christ in these plain words, that no man can come to me, except the Father which sent me draw him. And are also told, that it is God that worketh in us both to *will* and to *do* his own good pleasure.

It is generally acknowledged that man is born into the world without any degree of innate

knowledge or goodness, and as generally acknowledged that God is the source and fountain of all goodness, wisdom, and power. It is therefore evident that whatever goodness, wisdom, or power, any human being ever did, or ever will possess, must be the free gift of God, for it can be obtained no where else. It is therefore evident, that if the Deity should refuse to communicate to us a sufficient degree of his wisdom and goodness to qualify us for happiness, both here and hereafter, it is now, and ever has been, impossible to obtain these indispensable qualifications from any other source.

It is evident that God did not create man with sufficient powers to resist every kind and degree of temptation, and to obey the laws of his Maker perfectly; yet, although he transgressed and fell, he did not leave him to perish eternally in this helpless condition, but laid the burthen of our numerous transgressions upon one that was both willing and able to save and restore all those who were lost. Isaiah liii. 6. *All* we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on *him* the iniquities of us *all:* i. e. of *all* that had *gone astray*. 1 John iv. 14. This is the person which John testifies was sent by his Father to be the Saviour of the world. Mat. xxviii. 18. who

invested him with all the power in Heaven and on earth. Thus armed with omnipotence, he came to restore the human race, even *all* who had gone astray. 1 John iii. 8. He was also manifested to destroy the works of the devil. Heb. ii. 14. and not only his works, but the devil himself. Now is it not evident, that those who openly declare and teach, that Christ never will either save or restore the world, nor destroy the works of the devil, nor the old traitor himself, are infidels in the proper sense of the word? For barely acknowledging the being of a God, and denying his goodness, wisdom, and power, can never constitute a true Christian believer.

To affirm that the Deity has created beings which he never *wished* to save, is imputing to him an act of injustice and cruelty, of which no benevolent being would be guilty. To say that he once *wished* them all to be eventually happy, but that he positively knew, before he created them, that vast numbers of them would be eternally miserable, is grossly impeaching his goodness, wisdom, and power; for goodness would have prohibited their creation, if wisdom could not have contrived a plan, by which almighty power might have prevented their eternal torments.

It was the omnipotent Jehovah who created us; it was he who laid the plan for our redemption; and it is a being who styles himself our Father, who must execute it; and he certainly was a competent judge of the extent of his own powers, to enable him to know exactly what he could do; so that he ran no risk of having his plans defeated by the interference of any other powers. What he ever *wished* to do, he will certainly accomplish; and all the logic in the universe will never be able to persuade me, that God ever willed the eternal damnation of any human being, either before or after he had brought it into existence. And I am certain that no human being will ever be eternally damned contrary to his will. For God has explicitly declared his will in 1 Tim. ii. 4. which is, that *all men* should be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth.

Letter X. Stonehouse.

Sect. III....*Christ the* [*soter*] *restorer or deliverer of all men.*

This truth is pronounced and established by so many corresponding texts in scripture, and in such variety of expression, that the unprejudiced must readily assent to it. So Luke iii. 6. All flesh shall see the restoration of God. 1 John ii. 2. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not

for ours only, but also for the sins of the *whole world.* John iv. 42. We know that this is indeed the Christ the restorer of the world. 1 Tim. ii. 4. Who *wills* that *all men* should be restored, and come to the acknowledgment of the truth. Tit. ii. 11. The grace of God which bringeth restoration to *all men*, hath appeared. In the Syriac this passage is thus read: the grace of God restoring (or quickening) *all* hath appeared unto all the sons of men. 1 John iv. 14. We do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the restorer of the world. 2 Pet. iii. 9. The Lord is long suffering for your sake, being not willing (*me bolomenos*) i. e. not counselling that any one should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Neither is this great event revealed to us merely as what shall be, but as an event resting upon, and having its root in, the very nature of things; as a purpose of God not arbitrary, but grounding its basis upon the greatest of all other occurrences which Heaven or earth has yet been witness of, namely, *redemption finished* for us. For Christ has indeed exhausted the whole venom of sin in his own body, and is in himself, singly, both the cause and power of our recovery. And hence again we read, John i. 29. Behold the lamb of God which beareth away

(ten amartian) the sin (in the singular number) *of the world.* 2 Cor. v. 19. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses: verse 21. for he hath made him to be sin for us *(uper emon amartian epoieesen)* that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Isaiah xxxviii. 17. Thou hast cast all our sins behind thy back. 1 John i. 7. If we walk in the light, &c. The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin; insomuch that, Isaiah i. 18. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool: and this merely because Christ is singly, in his own person, the propitiation for the sins of all; so, Heb. i. 3. Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself *(di e auto)* purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high. Col. ii. 13. Having forgiven all trespasses, blotting out the hand writing of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and he took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. Heb. ix. 26. But now once *(epi sunteleia ton aionon)* about the meeting of the extremities of the *æons* hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrafice of himself. Upon this ground, says St. Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 3. He is the

head of every man, and not of every man only; for, Rom. xiv. 9. To this end Christ died, and rose again, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and of the living (or quickened) as it is written, every knee shall bow to me.

But if all this be true, how idle the supposition that satan shall be lord of corrupted nature so long as is Christ of restored nature; or that sinners shall be sinners in hell eternally, irrecoverably! Does the scripture teach us so? 1 John iii. 8. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might dissolve (*luse*) the works of the devil. He will, therefore, most surely dissolve them or reduce them to nothing; and how? In a few instances only? But his work will be a perfect and accomplished work, extending universally to every individual.—Yea, if he should fail in any single instance, his work, in that degree, must fall short of the purposes of his will, seeing he will have *all men* to be restored and come to the acknowledgment of the truth; which is only saying, in other terms, that he will have all the mischievous works of satan in every man, to be utterly defeated and invalidated; he will have all to be restored to life in him.

But besides these considerations, are not lost souls declared expressly to be our Saviour's? Are we not assured that the lost are those very souls which he came to seek and to restore? So far are these from being unsusceptible of restoration, that they are the very destined subjects of his restoring power, the reason that he is now God-man. 1 Tim. i. 15. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to restore [or deliver] sinners. Our Lord accordingly styles himself the friend of publicans and sinners, and tells us that he died for sinners while they were sinners; that he was manifested to take away their sins; that this taking away their sins is that favourite business which first brought him down from the bosom of his Father; which moved him to empty himself, to take upon him the form of a servant, to become a man of no account, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Moreover, when a man, it was not any natural insensibility or hardiness, for he had a weak and delicate frame of body; but it was the expectation of seeing the travail of his soul in the restoration of sinners, that encouraged him through all his sufferings....that made his thorny crown tolerable....that allayed the violence of his stripes, and that supported his resolution upon the cross, till he could cry out with a loud voice,

it is finished. Luke xii. 50. I have a baptism, says he, to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished! And can we believe that this straitening labour, his restoring office, is now no longer his dear concern; that it now ceases to be his urgent employment, his joy, his glory? Can we believe that Christ's love is abated by his dying for us? or his power lessened by his ascension? Is he now no longer able to restore lost souls from Hades, or seize his redeemed from out of the grasp of the wicked one? The thought either way is very unworthy of him; a base impeachment of so much love, of so efficacious a sacrifice, and of so great an authority. [*Letter X. Sect. IV.*

Wickedness shall have its due punishment, yet shall not defeat our Lord's purposed restoration. [*Stonehouse.*

I have often wondered at the weakness of people reasoning for an eternal damnation, from the observed prevailing power of sin, from its abounding, as it were, in defiance of God; and because, say they, such numbers of the dying must be daily lost among the damned. For what can be argued from hence against the universal efficacy of our Lord's atonement hereafter to prevail, as now in the first fruits, so

finally in all? Does it follow that because the effects of our Lord's sacrifice do not immediately display themselves universally, that therefore they never will? Were not the Jews declared to be a redeemed people long before that redemption was dispensed to them? For ages before its accomplishment, or even his incarnation, does not our Lord pronounce himself the restorer or *redeemer* of his people; so, Isaiah xliv. 22. I have blotted out, as a cloud, thine iniquities, as a thick cloud thy sins; return unto me, for I have *redeemed* thee: sing, O heavens, for Jehovah has done it. A promise not even yet formally accomplished, Rom. xi. 25, 26. So Isaiah liv. 4, 5. Thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, for thy Maker is thy husband, Jehovah of Hosts is his name, and thy *redeemer* the holy one of Israel, the God of the whole earth. Again, Jehovah is king of Israel; his *redeemer*, Jehovah of Hosts. Again, I will gather them, for I have *redeemed* them. Again, their *redeemer* is strong, Jehovah of Hosts is his name. Again, Hos. vii. 13. Wo unto them, for they have strayed from me; destruction unto them, because they have transgressed against me. Though I have *redeemed* them, yet have they spoken lies against me. Note: Here we see destruction and *redemption* expressly declared of the same individuals; and

that they on whom woes and destruction are denounced, are nevertheless the *redeemed* of God. Heb. x. 31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. And yet are our sufferings permitted in his tender love of us: they result from a beneficence veiled, that it may be more effectual, in the forms of severity.

"Good when he gives, supremely good;
Nor less when he denies:
Even crosses, from his sov'reign hand,
Are blessings in disguise."

But for vain and useless miseries, or which have no good event in view, we can find neither ground of existence, nor place in nature, nor author to produce them; they contradict all our ideas of goodness, wisdom, mercy, and power, in the divine dignity; and have nothing to recommend them besides texts mis-rendered, and an authority which it is the profession of Protestants to renounce. Though God may not have decreed one half the events that occur, yet, since he has provided that every course of *willing* within the possibility of the creature's choice shall terminate ultimately in real good, the *free will* of any creature can ultimately do him no harm.

Temporal sufferings, however exquisite or lasting, necessarily suppose an end suitable to the nature of him by whose authority they are contingently constituted, and of consequence an end salutary; i. e. one way or other, according to the creature's choice, for the creature's benefit. But what is permitted by God as salutary, must be big with salutary effects.

In pursuance of this reflection, then, we may well suppose the violent anguish (although merely the event of the creature's own will) to be occasionally a production of love concealed, having joy and glory, with all the blessings of a divine bounty in its issue; and this, too, infallibly, since no resistance in the creature can finally defeat the gracious ends of Christ's sacrifice for *all*. Moreover, the workings of our *æonian* God, or the God of nature, towards this gracious direction of all occurrences, are already, even at this very time, obvious in all men, as we gather from the Apostle's words, Rom. viii. 19, 23. The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revelation of the sons of God: for the creation was made subject to vanity (not willingly, but by him who subjected it) in hope that the creation itself should be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

For we know that the whole creation groaneth together, and travelleth together until now; and not only they, but even we ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the *redemption* of the body.

A late good author, whom we will call B. remarks with a generous frankness upon this passage as follows: verse 19. The earnest expectation. The "words denote a lively hope of something drawing near, and a vehement longing after it. Of the creation....of all visible creatures (believers excepted, who are spoken of apart) each kind according as it is capable. All these have been sufferers through sin, and to all these shall refreshment redound from the glory of the children of God. Upright heathens are by no means excluded: no, nor the vainest of men, who (although in the hurry of life they mistake vanity for liberty, and partly stifle, partly dissemble their groans, yet) in their sober, quiet, sleepless, afflicted hours, pour forth many sighs in the ear of God. Verse 21. Shall be delivered. Destruction is not deliverance."

Mr. B. here, by the whole creation mentioned of the Apostle in this passage as subject to vanity, and groaning together for deliverance, understands "all visible creatures who are unbelievers;" for, says he, "the believers are ex-

cepted, and spoken of apart :" and whereas the whole creation so groaning, according to the Apostle's words, verse 21. shall be *delivered.*

Mr. B. must mean that all the visible creatures who are now unbelievers shall be delivered, even the vainest of men. We make no doubt that Mr. B. will acknowledge, that all unbelievers shall die, perish, be destroyed; because we can no otherwise believe the scriptures. But he says farther, that "destruction is not deliverance;" therefore, according to him, the whole creation of unbelievers must be both destroyed and delivered. And because Mr. B. cannot suppose that the whole creation of unbelievers shall first be delivered, and afterwards destroyed, he must mean that the whole creation of unbelievers shall first be destroyed, and after that delivered; as has been already observed on a passage of Sophocles, see page 46, the wicked soul *(sothesetai)* shall be *recovered*, after that *(apoleto)* it has been destroyed. According to Mr. B. therefore, destruction and delivery infallibly awaiting all the unbelieving, visible creation, the one, namely, destruction, shall be the doom, the other, namely, deliverance, the recovery of all visible creatures who are unbelievers. Now a type of this our destruction and deliverance, we have daily before

our eyes in the bodies of our fellow-creatures, who all die and corrupt, in order to revive again into an higher kind of life.

Let us, then, satisfy ourselves, that as Christ is the restorer of the world, the world must finally be restored...that as he has solemnly promised to draw *all men* unto him, all men must finally come unto him...that as he enlightens *every man* that cometh into the world, *every man* that cometh into the world must finally be a child of light; (for this light so given must have an end worthy the kind giver;) and that as he died for the sins of the whole world, and in so dying tasted death for *every man*, the sins of the *whole world* are atoned for, and the benefit of his tasted death must finally reach every man.

I presume it must be granted, that Christ would never have undertaken the painful task of restoring the human race to the favour of God and permanent happiness, if he had not ardently wished, and positively designed to persevere in the use of adequate means to accomplish his gracious purpose. And as he assures us that he was invested with all the power in Heaven and upon earth, Mat. xxviii. 18. we may rest assured that he is both able and willing to draw *all men* unto him, John xii. 32. The im-

portant business which Christ was afterwards sent to accomplish, was foretold by the prophet Daniel near 538 years before he appeared on earth, which was, to *finish transgression*....to make an *end* of *sins*....to make *reconciliation* for *iniquity*....and bring in *everlasting righteousness*. Daniel ix. 24. Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy City, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophesy, and to anoint the most holy. Upon this text Mr. Poole makes the following comment, viz.

First, Note....the angel discovers first the disease, in three words, Peshang, Gnavon, Chata oth, which contains all sorts of sin which the Messiah should free us from by his full redemption. See Exodus xxxiv. 6, 7. Mat. i. 21. viz. original, actual, of ignorance, presumption, &c.

Secondly, The angel shews us also the cure of this disease, in three words, *le callee*, *le chatam*, *le capper*. 1. To finish transgression. 2. To make an end of sin. 3. To make reconciliation. All which words are very significant in the original, and signify to pardon, to blot out, mortify, expiate; that is, to bring in justifica-

tion by the free grace of God in Jesus Christ, the Lord our righteousness, Isa. liii. 6. Jer. 23. 6. and xxxiii. 16. 1 Cor. i. 30. Called everlasting because Christ is eternal, and he and his righteousness is everlasting. If all this be true, how egregiously are the Partialists mistaken, who obstinately persist in affirming, that Christ will never either finish transgression, or make an end of sin! For if sinners are to be confined in hell eternally, cursing and blaspheming the name of him who created them for this very purpose, he having, as they suppose, sentenced them to perdition by an eternal decree of reprobation, prior to their existence. How, then, is it possible that Christ should fulfil the prophet Daniel's prediction, i. e. that he should *finish transgression*, and make an end of sins! Nay, to put the matter past all dispute, many of them have laboured to prove sin to be infinite, and it is evident that whatever is *infinite*, can never be brought to an end or terminated, as the natural and grammatical meaning of the word *infinite* signifies endless duration.

If the doctrines of the Partialists are true, then the Prophets and Apostles, and even Christ himself, were greatly to blame for promising that he should perform impossibilities, and do many things which they affirm he neither ever wished

or intended to accomplish, such as, that he would finish transgression and make an end of sins....that he would destroy the works of the devil....that he would destroy him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil, John i. 29. John proclaims him to be the lamb of God, who should take [or bear away] the sin of the world. 1 John iv. 14. he says, And we have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. 1 John ii. 2. It is affirmed, that he is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. Eph. i. 9. Paul says, Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed to himself. 10. That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, he might gather into *one* all things in Christ, both which are in Heaven, and which are on earth, even in him. Col. i. 19. For it pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell. 20. And having made peace by the blood of his cross, and by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things on earth or things in Heaven. It is declared, 1 Tim. ii. 6. That Christ gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. And St. Paul tells the Hebrews, Heb. ii. 9. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, by the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour,

that he, by the grace of God, should *taste death* for *every man*. But the most important promise is made by Christ himself, John xii. 32. saying, And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, *will draw all men unto me*. 33. This he said, signifying what death he should die.

Now, if all this be false, or even doubtful, what have we that we can repose confidence in, or depend upon? For it is evidently impossible that Christ should ever *finish* transgression, or make an *end* of *sins*, if it be true, as the Partialists affirm, that vast numbers of unreclaimed transgressors, and the most flagitious sinners shall be eternally transgressing and sinning in hell!

But their best and indeed only plea is, that all these promises must be construed synechdocally, and will be but partially fulfilled, so that, when it is promised that the Messiah should *finish* transgression, and make an *end* of *sins*, it only signifies, that he will *finish* the trangressions, and make an *end* of the sins of a *few* individuals; that he will *destroy* the *works* of the *devil* in the *elect* only. And where it is said that Christ is the *propitiation* for the *sins* of the *whole world*, it only means the *world* of *believers*. *All*, in their vocabulary, means *some*; and *every*

man means a *few*, or an indefinite number of men.

These people must surely esteem it a most invaluable privilege to have a precedent established by almost universal consent, whereby (with the improper application of a few rhetorical figures and tropes) they can explain away the literal and grammatical sense of the plainest texts and passages of scripture, and construe them to support the most absurd tenets; for their preconceived opinions are the standard to which the scriptures must comply.

The unpardonable sin.

It is common for the Partialists, when their other resources fail to support their favourite doctrine, to grasp with avidity at this denunciation as an irrefragable evidence to prove, that some individuals will be eternally damned, because it is asserted in Mark iii. 28, 29. Verily, I say unto you, all sins *shall* be *forgiven* unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation. And it is said in Matthew xii. 32. That whosoever speaketh a word against the son of

man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. All this may be absolutely true, and yet the blasphemer against the Holy Ghost escape eternal damnation; for God has promised, by the mouth of the prophet Daniel, that the Messiah should *finish transgression*, and make an *end* of all kinds of *sin*, which is a sufficient evidence to prove, that even the sin against the Holy Ghost is not an infinite evil; as it is an impossibility in the nature of things, to bring any thing which is infinite, to an end.

If there were but one *infinite sin* in the universe, it could neither be forgiven nor terminated; and the only method by which *transgression* can be *finished*, is to destroy or change the evil habits and propensities in every intelligent agent; or, in other words, to destroy the works of the devil, which will be effectually accomplished. Now if retributive punishment be admissible in the divine government, there must certainly be in the scale of unerring justice, an exact proportion established between the various crimes that may be committed, and the punishments to be inflicted for each particular transgression, taking into consideration the op-

portunities of improvement, mental powers and capacities of the individuals who are to be judged; for the statement given in the above texts prove, incontestibly, that there are different degrees of criminality; because it is asserted that some crimes shall be forgiven, and this *one* in particular excepted, which shall *not*, either in this world, nor in that which is to come.... The blasphemer may therefore receive a severe chastisement adequate to his crime, and afterwards be restored to the favour of his gracious Creator.

And here we must observe, that these texts are so far from establishing the doctrine of eternal damnation, even in this particular case, that they militate against it in this and every other case. Mark says positively, That all sins *shall* be *forgiven* unto the sons of men, and blasphemies, wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme. And Matthew says, All manner of sin and blasphemy *shall* be *forgiven* unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.

If this be true that all sins and blasphemies shall be finally forgiven unto men, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven in this world, nor in the world to come,

does not the latter part of this text fairly imply that *every other sin* may be *forgiven* in the *world* to *come*, that is, after this life? For if every other sin was in the same predicament with this, that is, excluded from forgiveness in the world to come, wherein consists the propriety of giving this as an exception, or the only one that shall be precluded from forgiveness in a future state? And as Matthew says positively, that *all* other *sins* and *blasphemies* shall be forgiven, it therefore evidently follows, that if all sins are not forgiven in this world, they must and will be forgiven or done away in the *world* to *come*. Otherwise Daniel predicted a falsehood when he said that the Messiah would *finish transgression*, and make an *end* of *sins*. But if Daniel's words are true, when transgression is *finished*, and sin brought to an *end*, misery must also terminate, for the sting of death is sin; and therefore damnation will not be eternal. To inflict punishment with any other view or design than *reformation*, is tyranny; and to continue it after every good purpose has been accomplished that could be effected by this means, would be the *ne plus ultra* of revenge, and therefore both unjust and cruel. It is impossible that revenge should be an attribute of the Deity, for John asserts that God is love; and it would surely be the extreme of blasphemy to affirm, that his at-

tributes are a compound of infinite love and beneficence, and infinite revenge and cruelty; for all his attributes are infinite.

Whence comes moral evil?

To investigate this subject, and give a proper answer to the question, we must take experience for our guide, otherwise we may be led astray by the various opinions that have been promulgated on this important subject. For this purpose let us contemplate our species as they are sent into this world, entirely devoid of every kind and degree of knowledge, but generally endued with mental powers and faculties susceptible of improvement by experience and proper tuition. We are also furnished with innate appetites and passions, which are implanted in our nature by the Deity, to answer the best purposes, when under the conduct of reason, by which their impulsive operations are restrained within due bounds, and directed to proper objects. There are also proper objects destined to operate upon these appetites and passions, which may be denominated motives, or incentives to action; or were we to be divested of these innate propensities, and the objects withdrawn that are destined to act upon and excite them, we should be as useless in the creation, as a

ship without sails, or wind to act upon them. But to fit the ship properly for a prosperous voyage, requires not only sails, and wind to impel them, but also a good compass to direct the course, and an helm in the hand of a skilful pilot to guide her. So must reason direct our course through life, to the harbour of permanent felicity; and experience, like a faithful pilot, steer his course by the pole-star of rectitude. When we are excited by these means to the performance of any laudable purpose, we are thereby urged to fulfil an incumbent duty; but when the excitement tends to a breach of the moral law, it is generally denominated a temptation, and the perpetration criminal, as being calculated to produce disorder, confusion, and misery; for, as God is a being who delights in order, and the happiness of all his creatures, he has prohibited every action introductive to disorder or unnecessary human misery. Under these circumstances we are placed here at school, to gain an experimental knowledge of the nature, tendencies, and consequences of moral good, and of both *moral* and *physical evil*; by which means they will at length be fully convinced, that without virtue it is impossible to be happy; and that misery is the natural and necessary consequence of vice. And also that it is not in the power of mere humanity to keep the laws

of God perfectly, which will finally cause them to place their whole reliance upon the person chosen by God to keep and fulfil the law in our stead.

But in pursuance of this scheme of probation, and gradual improvement in moral science, it is necessary that the human *will* should remain perfectly *free* from the coercive influence of every superior power whatever; otherwise we should not be *moral, accountable agents*, but mere passive instruments in the hands of those beings who govern the *will*; and therefore as improper objects of either praise or blame, as machines of any other kind or construction; and under these circumstances, to call one man virtuous, and another vicious, would be as ridiculous as to talk of a virtuous and vicious house-clock.

But those good people who amuse themselves and others, conversing about the duties of moral, accountable agents, who have been divested many ages ago, of both the freedom of their *will*, and all moral power of action, or whose *will* is entirely under the direction and controul of superior beings, ought to re-consider this subject candidly, by which means they may probably be convinced, that both the idea and language are

as absurd, as to talk of the freedom of a gally-slave chained to an oar, and expatiate on his social and civil duties. But although the Deity does not act coercively upon the will of any human being, it is by his influence alone, that rational conviction is conveyed to the understanding. It was owing to the ignorance and inexperience of mankind that moral evil was first introduced into the world, being permitted by the Deity as the only means by which we could possibly gain an experimental knowledge of the nature, qualities, and different tendencies of moral good and evil. But as ignorance and inexperience introduced moral evil, so shall knowledge finally banish it out of the creation, when all shall be taught of God, and shall all know him from the least of them even to the greatest of them, whom to know is life eternal.

But as a person can neither be denominated virtuous or vicious, who, like the idiot, act without either design or intelligent motive, or who abstain from the perpetration of any particular vice because they have no natural propensity to it, as is the case with eunuchs, who avoid frequenting houses of ill fame. It is therefore necessary, in this experimental institution, not only that the pupils should be furnished with appetites and passions to be acted upon, but

also to have suitable incentives to excite them to action. But reason matured by experience and attentive observation, should determine, whether the impulse should be obeyed or not. If the action to which we are excited tends to a breach of the moral law, or the introduction of discord, confusion, or needless misery, to obey the impulse would be criminal, which will surely produce such a degree of remorse, as to produce contrition. But if the excitement urges to the performance of an action calculated to produce peace, order, or permanent happiness, to obey the impulse is virtuous; but as a well regulated conduct depends upon the maturity of our judgement, and our judgement can only be matured by careful observation and experience, and by bringing every doubtful or controverted opinion to the only true theological standard, the immutable attributes of the Deity. But as this requires time and the exertion of talents, which very few individuals possess, a vast variety of very discordant theories in religion arose as an inevitable consequence of ignorance; and as these great evils were at first produced by ignorance, which soon begat superstition, they are still supported and maintained by the prejudice of an early education, which is generally an invincible obstacle to candid investigation, and is almost invariably constituted the standard by

which the scriptures are explained by the different denominations.

This is incontrovertibly proved by comparing the various discordant explanations given to the same texts and passages of scripture by the best linguists of the different denominations; so that unless a person will take the trouble of examining for himself, he may be led to conclude that the scriptures were not written to enlighten and inform our understandings, but to puzzle and perplex our judgements. At one time when it suits the purpose of the person with whom we are conversing, we are told that the meaning of the sacred authors is so plain, that those who run, may read and understand the truths delivered. But in the course of a few minutes our instructor perceives that he cannot bring us to see and understand the subject in discussion, we are told, that the natural man cannot understand the truths that are delivered in the scriptures, because they are spiritually discerned; and therefore we must implicitly receive the explanations of our spiritual guides, who all profess to understand their spiritual meaning, which they explain to suit their various discordant tenets. If this be a proper explanation of the text, the scriptures have not been written to instruct and convert ignorant publicans and sin-

ners, who cannot understand their spiritual meaning; nor can they know (unles they are inspired) to whom they should apply for the explanation of things which are unintelligible to them.

What should we think of a physician, who, after having prescribed for his patient in some unknown language, would tell him, in plain English, that the medicine which I have prescribed you, can be of no possible service to you, until you have first recovered perfect health!

LETTER V. *From Dr. Young's Contrast; written to a rigid Calvinist.*

When, in conversation with you, I affirmed that St. Paul was an Universalist, I promised to quote some of the most pointed texts by which he inculcates the doctrine in the most clear and positive terms. Rom. v. 18. "Therefore, as by the offence of *one*, judgement came upon *all men* to condemnation: *even so* (i. e. in like manner) by the righteousness of *one*, the free gift came upon *all men* unto justification of life." Rom. viii. 32. "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for *us all*, how shall he not, with him also, freely give us all things?" Rom. xi. 32. "for God hath concluded *them all*

in unbelief, that he might [illegible]
By the first of these texts it plainly appears that Adam was the representative of *all his posterity*, or of human nature in general, otherwise judgement to condemnation could not, with even the colour of justice, come upon all his posterity for his offence; that Jesus Christ, by assuming the human nature, became as fully and completely the representative of *all mankind*, as Adam was, or had been; and therefore, by his righteousness, the *free gift* came *upon all men*, unto *justification* of *life*. So ye see, that St. Paul considers Christ as the complete representative and Saviour of all mankind; who, by his righteousness, had wrought out a complete salvation for the whole human race, unto the justification of life, which he bestows as a free gift; and if God justifieth, who is he that condemneth? And further, to establish them in the belief of this glorious doctrine, he argues, that as God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for *us all*, he will, with him, also freely give us all things. And to convince them that Christ was not that partial Saviour, which many conceive him to be, who would sit down contentedly, and receive as many of the souls which he had redeemed, as the devil might be pleased to give him, he tells the Romans, who were heathen Gentiles, "That God

in unbelief, that he might [illegible] *upon all.*" 1 Cor. xv. 22. "For as [illegible]m all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." 2 Cor. v. 14. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one *died for all*, then were all dead: and that he died *for all*, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again." Rom. xiv. 9. "For to this end Christ both died and rose and revived, that he might be Lord of both the dead and living." If so, he must be Lord of all. Col. i. 15. St. Paul calls Christ "the invisible image of God, the first born of every creature." 16. "For by him were all things created that are in Heaven, and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers, all things were created *(di auto)* by him, and *(eis auton)* for himself." If, therefore, Christ made all things for himself, he must deviate greatly from his original intention, before he gives up any thing to the devil, especially the souls which he made for himself. 1 Tim. ii. 1. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for *all men*:" 3. "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." 4. "Who *will* have *all men* to be

saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth." 5. "For there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." 6. "Who gave himself a *ransom for all*, to be testified in due time."

St. Paul exhorts Timothy, first of all, to make supplications, &c. for *all men*, as being acceptable to God our Saviour, who is a being of such universal benevolence, as to *will* that *all men* should be *saved*, and come to the knowledge of the truth." And whatever the omnipotent Jehovah *wills* to be done, he will certainly accomplish. But the Apostle, to shew that the salvation of *all men* was not only possible, but easily practicable, he observes, that there is one God to be appeased, who is a God of infinite goodness and mercy, who *wills* that all men may be saved, and one Mediator between this gracious God and men, to wit, the man Christ Jesus, who is the advocate and friend of mankind universally, as he has already given himself a *ransom*, not for a few individuals, but for *all* mankind. And although this great and important truth may not be generally known to the chief Priests and Pharisees of our day, it shall nevertheless be testified in due time, to the honour of God, and the unspeakable consolation of every good being.

If, therefore, the supreme God is so *benevolent* as to *will* that all mankind should be *saved*, and has sent his beloved Son on purpose, to be the *Saviour* of the *world*, and Christ has, on his part, given himself a *ransom* for *all*, therefore as *all* have been ransomed, *all* must and will be restored to their lawful sovereign. He who redeems or ransoms captives, claims them as his own, and never leaves them in the possession of the enemy.

Can there be any thing more incredible, than to suppose (with the Methodists) that after Christ had given his precious life a *ransom* for the *whole world* of mankind, that he should nevertheless, leave vast numbers of these very beings, for whom he had shed his precious blood, in the *possession* of the devil eternally? Christ is neither a partial Saviour, nor a partial conqueror; he will never submit to the devil, and permit him to retain in perpetual captivity, *one* human soul whom he made for himself; for certainly he was not so complaisant, as to make any particular number of souls on purpose for the devil; and if the devil should retain in perpetual captivity, even *one* soul whom Christ had made for himself, then would he be defeated, and his gracious design frustrated. And to affirm, that Christ has made souls which he neither wished

to be finally happy, nor ever intended to save from endless perdition, is blasphemy, and the worst kind of infidelity. And I conceive it would be thought by every unprejudiced person, to be much less derogatory to the moral character of the Deity to suppose, that he abandoned the creatures which he had made, to the permanent dominion of the devil, through a defect of wisdom and power to rescue them, than to affirm that he had a sufficient degree of wisdom and power to save them, but that it was more agreeable to his divine *will* that great numbers should be eternally, irrecoverably miserable. If we suppose him to be infinitely *benevolent*, but *deficient* in *wisdom* and *power*, this would be a great misfortune, which every good being would deplore, and would wish to assist him. But if, on the contrary, he is supposed to be infinitely wise and powerful, but so *malevolent*, as to speak unoffending, inconscious matter into existence, infallibly knowing that the condition into which he brought it, was as much *worse* than that in which he found it, as a state of the most severe, eternal, never-ending punishment, is worse than a state of non-existence, is horrid beyond description....but so it is. The Calvinists having determined, that vast numbers of the human race must be eternally damned, rather than give up this darling tenet, they blaspheme the moral

character of the Deity, by affirming, that he forces into existence millions of human beings morally incapable of doing any good, but replete with the strongest propensities to do evil, which can neither be eradicated, nor even restrained, by any thing which they can do. And in this condition are they supposed to be excluded from the benefits of Christ's death and sufferings, and left to sin and suffer a few years on earth, and then to be sentenced, by the Judge of the whole earth, to suffer the most exquisite torments in hell flames, as long as God himself exists! when all this mischief and misery might have been avoided, by omitting to create all such beings as the Deity foreknew would be infinitely sinful and eternally miserable; for nothing short of *infinite guilt* can render any being justly obnoxious to an infinite punishment: and this is evidently impossible. 1 John iv. 8. "He that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is love. 10. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 14. And we have seen, and do *testify*, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." John iii. 17. "For God sent not his Son into the world to *condemn* the world, but that the world, through him, might be saved."

In the above cited texts it appears, that God is the most benevolent of all beings, whose very essence is love; his benevolence inspired him to create us; that he so loved the world, as to send his dearly beloved Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and the Saviour of the *world.* It should therefore be the business of our public teachers to exhibit the Deity in his real character, which consists of infinite *love* and unbounded *benevolence* to all created human beings. He hates sin, because it has a natural and necessary tendency to create disorder, confusion, and misery; but he hates not the souls which he has made, as evidently appears by his dying for them, while they were yet in a state of rebellion against him, Rom. v. 6. Is it not base, ungrateful, and ungenerous, to traduce the character of so good a being, to answer any sinister purpose whatever? The general pretext for preaching what has been called the terrors of the Lord, is, that it has a tendency to restrain licentious practices. But what advantage can we rationally expect to gain, by expelling *love* and *gratitude*, and substituting *fear* and *hatred* in their stead? For it is impossible that they can exist together.

. . . . . .

We should love the Lord our God with all our soul, heart, strength, and mind. But we are told in 1 John iv. 18. that "There is no *fear* in

love; but perfect love casteth out *fear*, because *fear* hath torment. He that feareth, is not made perfect in love." If perfect love casteth out fear, it is as certain that the perfect *fear* and *dread* of a tyrant, must and will cast out love, and occupy the human breast alone. It is impossible for them to subsist in perfection together; like fire and frost, as one *increases*, the other must *decrease* in exact proportion; therefore the people should never be taught to believe, that God is as much glorified and pleased with the death and eternal damnation of a sinner, as in the salvation and eternal felicity of a saint; as it is not in the power of imagination to paint a tyrant in more infernal colours. It is a character which no being, except the prince of devils, can possibly either love or imitate.... and there can be no doubt that the devil is highly pleased with those who endeavour to persuade their fellow-beings, that partiality, cruelty, and revenge, are the genuine attributes of the Deity; because it is impossible, in the nature of things, that any benevolent, rational being, should serve a God possessing such attributes through love, which is the only motive that can render our services acceptable to a God whose very essence is love.

With respect to the worship extorted, and rendered through a slavish fear, it can only debase the mind and derange the understanding, but can never produce real piety, and therefore can never be acceptable to that God who requires us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and our neighbours as ourselves.

We are also exhorted to love our enemies, and forgive those that trespass against us. Now if God neither loved his enemies, nor ever forgave all those that trespassed against him, but will torment millions of them in everlasting burnings as long as he exists, can it be possible that he expected that we should be more merciful and benevolent than himself, or recommend to us a line of conduct more virtuous and godlike than that which he practised himself? But thanks be to God, the fetters of ignorance and superstition are wearing out very fast, and prejudice, that bitter enemy to free enquiry and the investigation of truth, has lost much of its influence over the minds of great numbers of very sensible people; who begin to view the Deity as a being of strict, impartial justice, divine love, infinite goodness, benevolence, truth, and mercy; that has no pleasure in the death and eter-

nal damnation of a sinner, but would rather that he should turn from the evil of his ways and live.

If sin and its consequences be displeasing to a God of infinite goodness, wisdom, and power, is it not absurd to suppose, that he will permit them to remain in being to the endless ages of eternity? Are they of that indestructible nature, that infinite wisdom, aided by almighty power, cannot eradicate and destroy them? If he can destroy them, why should he permit them always to remain in being, to displease him eternally?

Are there some men who are, by nature, inconvertible, that infinite wisdom and power are incapable of reforming? Or does the Deity doom any souls to eternal misery but such as he cannot reclaim? Or does he doom to eternal misery any souls which he could but would not save? If any souls are supposed to be eternally miserable, I affirm, that they must belong to one of the above classes, to wit, such as God could have *saved*, but would not, or such as he would have *saved*, but could not. The first of these propositions *denies* God's infinite goodness, and therefore cannot be true. The second *denies* his infinite wisdom and power, which must be false. It is therefore false to say, that any of

the souls which God has created will be eternally and irrecoverably miserable; because Christ is both able and willing to save them all; who tells us, John xii. 32. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Now as Christ has been lifted up from the earth, on the cross, and from thence to the heavens, I make no doubt that he will fulfil his promise, even to those who believe that hell lies beyond the reach of almighty power; he will convince them that the keys of hell and death are not useless in his hand; he will break the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. Isaiah xlix. 25. "For thus saith the Lord, even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered."

I remain,
with the most sincere esteem,
your friend.

I would now beg leave to state two very important questions for serious and candid discussion. *First*, Whether we are now placed here in a state of probation, as free, moral, accountable agents? Or *secondly*, Are we placed here totally divested of a free will to choose, and moral power of doing any thing pleasing or ac-

ceptable to God; and to be passively governed by the will of superior beings, and actuated at their pleasure, to do either good or evil, as these superior beings are supposed alternately to gain possession of the human machine?

I presume there are but few subjects on theology that have presented so large a field for warm controversy, as that now stated for consideration; and probably there has never been a subject upon which so much has been said to so little purpose. The proper method of investigating this important subject, is to consider God as the only source and fountain of goodness, wisdom, and power, and the impossibility of deriving the least portion of either from any other source in the universe. It is therefore evident, that man is accountable for his conduct only in exact proportion to the degrees of wisdom, goodness, and power, the Deity may please to confer upon him; and the use he makes of these talents, which he is to improve, and not bury in a napkin. The person who is born an idiot, and remains incapable, during life, to distinguish in any degree between good and evil, is accountable to no being for his conduct; because he is not a moral agent, which condition requires knowledge to distinguish between good and evil, a free will to choose, and a power to

act agreeably to his choice. But all rational, human beings, are accountable for neglecting to improve the opportunities afforded to them of increasing their knowledge of the various duties which they owe both to God and their fellow men; for ignorance, which is the consequence of sloth, is criminal, and will receive correction.

But in every case in which God has withheld the capacity of discerning, or the power of acting agreeably to the free choice of the will, the being ceases to be responsible; for it is self-evident, that a being divested of any will of his own, and actuated by the will of any superior being, cannot be a moral, accountable agent, but is a mere machine. God only requires the improvement of the talents which he bestows, but does not expect perfect obedience from imperfect man.

Those who assert the eternal absolute decrees of election and reprobation, are necessitated to deny the free will of man, and to maintain his moral incapacity to do any thing pleasing or acceptable to God. They also affirm, that God has, for his own glory, determined by absolute, eternal decrees, whatsoever comes to pass in time. It is therefore evident (if the promises

be granted) that the conclusion must be, that free will and moral agency are conditions that are incompatible with these eternal decrees, by which every human action is unavoidably fixed and determined by God (who, according to this scheme) is in all cases the *agent*, and *man* the passive instrument or machine in his hand; in which circumstances, it is impossible that man should be a *moral*, accountable *agent*. But as this horrid doctrine constitutes God the *author* of *sin*; if they acted consistently, they should in justice acquit the *passive instrument* which he employs, of every degree of *criminality*, and not doom him to eternal torments, for not resisting the sovereign *will* and *power* of the Deity; for the action, whether good or bad, properly belongs to the being who *governs* the *will*. But it is evident from the whole tenour of the scriptures, that God never acts *coercively* upon the *will* of man; he addresses all his precepts and instructions to their understanding, and leads them, by rational conviction, into a knowledge of the truth; he treats them in all respects as rational, voluntary agents, that may receive and profit by instructions, which he is daily giving them, in various ways, which he has promised to continue until they *all* shall *know* the Lord from the least of them unto the greatest of them (whom to know is life eternal) for he

has promised to *forgive* their *iniquity*, and remember their *sin* no more, Jeremiah xxxi. 34. Isaiah liv. 13. And *all* thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children. John vi. 45. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God, every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. John vi. 37. "And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.

I now ask every candid person who may peruse this work, whether they conceive it to be probable, or even possible, that any person who has never had an opportunity of hearing of the Father, or of being taught by him, can justly be sentenced to eternal misery, by the only being who could have taught him the things pertaining to his eternal peace and happiness, and who had purposely omitted to do it? But God has promised in the above cited texts, that they shall all be taught of God from the least to the greatest; and Christ has promised that those who are thus taught, shall come to him, and that he will in no wise cast them out.

As my health appears to be declining so fast, as to render it very improbable that I shall be able to write much more, I therefore most earn-

estly desire, that some candid, able Calvinist, would undertake to point out the nature and extent of the moral and evangelical duties, which human beings can justly and reasonably be expected to perform, as moral, accountable agents, who have been deprived (without their own knowledge, or agency, and prior to their existence) of a free will to choose, and all moral inclination and ability to do any thing well pleasing or acceptable to God, or conducive to their own eternal salvation, and totally excluded from receiving any efficacious assistance from the holy spirit; and also to point out the legal, or justifiable principle by which the guilt of Adam's transgression is *imputed* to those, who are supposed to be precluded from the benefits resulting to others, from the sufferings, death, and perfect righteousness of Christ; and to punish them eternally for not working out their own salvation by the deeds of the law, or not complying, perfectly, with the terms of the gospel, which the Calvinists themselves acknowledge to be impossible, as they were never furnished with ability, either to fulfil the law perfectly, or to comply with the terms of the gospel, without the efficacious assistance of the Father of *all* mankind, which, in the present case, is supposed to be withheld. I know the common subterfuge in this case has been, to recur to the eternal de-

crees of election and reprobation; but as this is evidently attempting to prove the *propriety* of one act of *injustice* and *cruelty*, by another ten times worse; sensible people in general, have relinquished this plea, and have recourse to the representative plan of *probation*, and argue strenuously, that because the person acted amiss, which the Deity appointed to be their representative, it was perfectly *just* to exclude them from receiving any benefit from the covenant of grace, and leave them under the covenant of works, which they must *obey perfectly*, or *die eternally*, although they know and acknowledge, that the scriptures positively declare, that by the deeds of the law no flesh shall be justified.

PROPOSITION....*God is not the author of moral evil.*

Although I was brought up in a region where Calvinism reigned triumphantly, and was used, from infancy, to read in my Catechism, that the *decrees* of God are his eternal purpose, according to the council of his own will, whereby for his own glory he hath fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, my young mind repelled and spurned the horrid insinuation, that God was the real author of all the atrocious crimes that should ever be perpetrated, which very crimes he had prohibited in his precepts and

commands. I have always opposed this absurd doctrine in the various forms in which it has appeared, both in its dogmatical and philosophical garb. And lately upon reading Mr. Huntington's book, entitled Calvinism Improved, I have been induced to state this interesting subject in a mode susceptible of rational discussion, and cheerfully submit my reasoning upon it to the attentive consideration of all candid investigators of controverted opinions in the important science of theology. And as the means of directing the mind to the first principles of the subject, I have proposed the following questions, viz.

1. Is there not an eternal, essential, immutable difference between right and wrong, virtue and vice, and moral good and evil, which does not depend upon the arbitrary will and pleasure of any being in existence ?

2. Is not the moral law the law of nature, and of nature's God, being perfectly congenial with his divine attributes, and founded upon the eternal principles of rectitude, agreeably to the reason, nature, relations, and fitness of things, in all possible circumstances ?

3. If this be granted, is it not evident, that this law is eternal with respect to its duration, immutable in its nature, and of universal obligation upon every intelligent being in existence, in exact proportion to their natural capacities and means of improvement, to enable them to distinguish its precepts, and powers to fulfil its injunctions? If this be the case,

4. Can it be possible that God has laid mankind under an absolute, unavoidable necessity of transgressing the moral law, either by eternal, immutable decrees, or by constituting a certain concatenation of causes, to act as *motives* upon the human mind, with sufficient energy to determine the will to violate his commands?

5. Is it not an indispensable condition requisite to render an human being amenable to this most perfect of all laws, and to constitute him a moral, accountable agent, justly obnoxious to its penalties, that his mind and will should remain entirely free from the coercive influence of the *decrees*, or predeterminations of every superior being who would tempt him to sin?

The Deity is continually sending vast numbers of human beings into existence, in the most profound state of ignorance and imbecility;

but generally with powers and faculties of mind capable of various degrees of improvement, where the proper means of tuition are afforded; whose conduct and actions become cognizable by this perfect law, as soon as they become capable of distinguishing between moral good and evil; provided their wills remain entirely *free* from the controling influence of every superior agent capable of determining their choice.

As I cannot conceive a more self-evident truth, than that the being who governs the will, is the real author of the *action*, whether it be good or bad; and that the passive instrument is not a proper subject of either praise or blame. It has been alledged by those who believe God to be the real author and efficient cause of all moral evil, "That all power is of God, and that the sinner could not transgress if God had not furnished him with power for the purpose"... To which I answer, that although God has given to man very considerable powers of both body and mind, it does not appear even probable that he ever willed or decreed that they should employ these powers in violating his positive commands. Neither does it prove that the exercise and determinations of every human will are, at all times, and in all cases, directed and govern-

ed by the will of God ; for his will is certainly not so perverse as to dictate a breach of his positive commands.

If the Deity has, either by an eternal, immutable decree, or by arranging a certain concatenation of causes, to act as motives on the minds of all subordinate, intelligent beings, with sufficient power to influence their wills to determine, and in consequence to act exactly as they do, and not otherwise, it evidently follows, that there is but *one* will in the universe ; and, properly speaking, but *one* agency, which is carried on in the unlimited regions of space, by various subordinate, passive instruments ; and that the Deity is in reality the efficient cause, and sole author of all the atrocious crimes, and abominably filthy actions that were perpetrated in Sodom ; and then to show his great displeasure at what he had caused them to do, he consumed both them and their cities with fire from Heaven !

This wretched, bungling hypothesis, represents the Deity to be the most deceptive, inconsistent being in the universe ; he having (as they assert) in the first place decreed, or by some other means equally certain, rendered every immoral or criminal action that every

physical evil. This has ever been, now is, and forever will be, the merciful conduct of the Deity, until he has restored all his erring creatures to that state of permanent happiness, for which he created them.

When the prodigal grew impatient of restraint, under the economy of his father's house, and wished for greater liberty to exercise the *freedom* of his own *will*, his father was perfectly justifiable in permitting him to make the experiment, although he foreknew what his son's conduct would be, and the consequences that would result from it; when he obtained the license for which he petitioned, and his share of the goods, he departed into a far country, where, by his criminal practices and extravagance, he soon squandered the property his indulgent parent had given him, and as the natural and necessary consequence of the moral evil of which he had been guilty, he suffered the physical evils of hunger, nakedness, and bitter despondency, being reduced to the sordid condition of a swine-herd. These complicated sufferings produced in his mind a perfect conviction of, and sincere repentance for, his criminal folly; which induced him to return to his indulgent father, much better qualified to enjoy felicity than before experience had taught him how to con-

trast good with evil, and judge of their immense difference.

The late Rev. Mr. Huntington has, in the 218th page of his book, entitled Calvinism Improved, fairly classed himself with those who conceive they do God great honour by representing him to be an arbitrary, despotic sovereign, who acknowledges no law, or rule, but the dictates of his own *will*. The following are his sentiments: "With respect to God most high, his eternal, fixed *will* and *choice*, was never yet frustrated in any single instance, and never will be. This by no means excuses sin on our part; the mere nature of it is infinite guilt in us, in the first instance; yet it is certain that every thing, every event, in the natural and moral system, does take place just exactly as God chose and fixed in his immutable plan, before any creature had existence;" that is to say, God, as an arbitrary sovereign, has fixed every thing, every possible event, by absolute, immutable decrees, both in the natural and moral system, just exactly as he chose to have it in his immutable plan; and he then asserts, that this will and choice cannot be frustrated; and although it is impossible for mortals to resist his will, or to act otherwise than he has decreed they should, yet he asserts, "that this by no

means excuses what he calls sin on our part, the mere nature of it (he says) is infinite guilt in us." That is, in plain English, although God has willed and decreed every filthy, detestably sinful action which ever has been, or that ever shall be perpetrated; and although it is impossible for us to resist his will, or to avoid doing, in all respects, exactly as he had willed and decreed we should do; yet he asserts, we are infinitely criminal for executing the will of our Creator. Among the horrid crimes that are supposed to be rendered unavoidable by man (by this eternal, immutable plan) we may reckon rapes, robberies, murders, incest, and all the filthy, abominable crimes of the Sodomites, which we all know God has prohibited by his positive commands, under the most severe penalties. But if this has been the conduct of the Deity, it is evident that he is not governed by any rational or moral principle; he being, by this blasphemous hypothesis, the real author, prohibitor and punisher of all the moral evil which he has rendered unavoidable by man. Such conduct has frequently been ascribed to the devil. The Clergy tell us, that he first tempts people to sin, and then punishes them severely for it! But if there is not a real, intrinsic, essential, immutable difference between right and wrong, virtue and vice, or moral good and evil

in the eternal reason and nature of things, and that all these most important concerns depend upon the arbitrary will of a being who has purposely rendered all kinds of moral evil unavoidable by man, and afterwards prohibited these very same actions by positive commands. How, then, are nations to regulate their moral conduct, who have no written law supposed to be of divine origin? Or by what rule are people to judge which of the various pretended revelations which have been offered to them, contains the will of God?

Let us suppose for an example, that a Christian should undertake to proselyte a Mahometan, and advise him to read our scriptures, assuring him that they contained the revealed will of God. The Mahometan asks him by what means he became positively assured that these scriptures contained the revealed will of the Deity?

Christian. The sacred truths contained in these volumes, were all confirmed by miracles.

Mahometan. So, also, were those contained in ours.

Chris. But our scriptures have one incontestable evidence of their celestial origin, which is

wanting in yours, viz. the moral precepts and commands in our scriptures are all founded upon the eternal, immutable principles of rectitude, agreeably to the reason, nature, relations, and fitness of things in all circumstances.

Mahom. How can we believe this character of your scriptures to be genuine, when it is known and acknowledged, that many of your most eminent Divines assert, that your scriptures teach that God by eternal, immutable decrees, or by some other means as unavoidable, has rendered every crime that ever has, or ever shall be perpetrated, inevitable by man, and afterwards prohibited these very actions by positive commands. How can any rational being believe that God has acted so inconsistently?

But if we should even grant that all the difference between moral good and evil depended upon the arbitrary will of Alla, yet it is impossible that his *will* should constitute the same action both good and bad, or right and wrong at the same time, and exactly under similar circumstances.

I believe almost all nations have ascribed the origin and progress of moral evil to the machinations of the devil; but if it be true, as your

Mr. H. affirms, " that *every thing*, *every event* in the natural and moral system, does take place just exactly as God chose and fixed in his immutable plan before any creature had existence, it evidently follows, that the devil stands fairly acquitted, and that instead of being traduced and execrated, as the author of all moral evil, he should be pitied as an innocent fellow-sufferer, who has been punished most severely for executing the plan of an omnipotent being, whose will he could not possibly resist! If the Deity wills and plans all the moral evil in the universe, and men and devils execute it agreeably to his will, why should they be blamed or punished?

Least it should be thought that I have mistaken and misrepresented Mr. Huntington's sentiments, I wish the candid reader to peruse his book, particularly the 218, 219, 248, and 249th pages, where they will find his sentiments that have been already quoted, and compare them with the following, to wit, " Had there been an eternal, supreme being, creator and absolute proprietor of all things, as Jehovah is, who, in his moral disposition, his moral nature had been just the reverse from what he really is. Horrible supposition! but lawful in the view I make of it. Had he created innumerable myriads of rational creatures more than ever

yet had existence, and made them all consummately sinful and miserable; and had we our place in that woeful scale of beings doomed to endless sin and sorrow, and pain unutterable, even on this supposition we could have no *claim* of justice on our Maker, as we have upon our fellow-creatures who injure us: they take hold of property not their own, but ours, in opposition to their claim. Not so is it with regard to the supreme fountain of all being, who is Creator and absolute proprietor of all things, including all the feelings and all the sufferings of his creatures, their very pains, and all their affections are his property, for their whole being is so. In such an awful, lamentable case as the above supposed, we could never accuse our Maker of injustice with any kind of propriety. All we could say would be, to howl in doleful accents to all eternity, the Supreme reigneth, let all creatures mourn; let the multitude of beings lament and bewail! Woe, woe, woe! to miserable creatures, that such is the nature and disposition of him that ruleth over all."

I presume there never has been a more bold, unequivocal attempt made, with a design to prove that there is no real, essential, immutable difference between right and wrong, moral good and evil, and justice and injustice, in the eternal rea-

son and nature of things; and that all these are fanciful, nominal distinctions, which have no foundation in the nature of things, but do in reality depend upon the arbitrary *will* of any being who has power to create other beings. Even the devil himself, if possessed of power to produce rational beings, endued with the most exquisite degree of sensibility, he (the devil) would have the most perfect right, founded upon arbitrary power, to render them consummately sinful and eternally miserable; and although they might suffer the most exquisite torments, and howl and lament eternally, they could have no *just* or well grounded right to *complain*, because it was the *will* of the supreme despot who created them, that it should be so. But why? "Because he was their Creator, and absolute proprietor of all things, including their feelings and sufferings, their very pains, and all their affections are his property, for their whole being is so." This sounds, in my ears, like the logic of a West India Planter, with respect to his cruelty to his negroes!

Bishop Tillotson when discussing this important subject, observes, "That no being, by conferring a *small favour*, can thereby acquire a *right* to inflict a *greater injury*." And I am persuaded, that every sensible person must allow, that

simple existence, without enjoyment, either in possession, or in prospect, is no very great blessing.

But Mr. H. in order to fix arbitrary *will* and despotic power upon the most exalted basis, has stated a case from which every idea of enjoyment is excluded, and the susceptibility, and actual endurance of every evil, both moral and physical, are comprised; and boldly asserts, that rational beings, thus circumstanced, would not have any just cause to complain; because they were the entire property of the being who created them! Thus, according to his scheme, *power sanctifies will*, and *will*, thus *supported*, sanctifies the most villainous conduct, and every base, flagitious, immoral action.

This, my friends, is Calvinism improved, or perhaps, more correctly, the language of a Calvinist, who had boldness and candour enough to declare his sentiments in plain, explicit language.

Although the Calvinists explicitly declare, that God from all eternity had *willed* and *decreed* every possible *event* that should ever come to pass, which must include both moral and physical evil, yet they alledge, that he has done this

in such an ingenious way, as to avoid being reputed the real *author* and efficient *cause* of all *moral evil.* This is perfectly effected by the exquisite machinery of *secret causes* which act upon the human *mind* as *motives*, with sufficient energy to *determine* the *will* to *act* in all cases, and under all circumstances exactly as they do, and not otherwise; so that they appear both to themselves and others, to act with perfect freedom in all they do.

Mr. Huntington asserts, that the criminality of mankind (which he believes to be infinite) does not consist in their having acted contrary to the eternal *will* and plan of the Deity (for this he affirms to be impossible) but in the evil disposition of their *will* to do so. "This very thing (says he) is your guilt, and there can be no guilt, no blame-worthiness in the universe in any thing else; but in the *evil will* and disposition, and its nature and operations."

How astonishing it is, to hear men declaiming against the *evil disposition* of the human *will*, who declare openly, that men have no *free will* of their own, but are actuated and governed in all they do, either by the influence of *eternal, secret decrees*, or the more immediate *influence* of a certain train or concatenation of *causes*, which

act with irresistible power upon the *mind*, to determine the *will* to act in all respects exactly as they do; and renders it impossible for them to act otherwise. With as much reason and propriety, might they not declaim against the evil *will* and disposition of a chiming-clock, because it played some discordant notes. This last scheme (if I mistake not) is the basis of the doctrine denominated philosophical necessity; on which I would just observe, that an ingenious device, as nearly similar to this astonishing invention as material machinery can resemble that of the mind, is practised by every expert puppet-show man, who conceals his wires so artfully, that the ignorant spectators conceive that the puppets are actuated, in all their various motions, by their own intrinsic, locomotive powers.

This subject has been drawn to a considerable length, in demonstrating propositions that were self-evident in the reason and nature of things; and although I am sensible it is chargable with tautology already, I must beg leave to repeat the substance of the whole, in a few words.

If all the future conduct and actions of men have been fixed and determined by the sovereign will and eternal decree of God, it evidently

follows, that he is the sole author and efficient cause of all moral evil! For whatever the superior, extrinsic *cause* may be, which necessarily constrains any person to act and behave exactly as they do, and renders it impossible for them to act otherwise, destroys their free agency, and thereby acquits them of every degree of responsibility, for every part of their conduct and actions in life; and under these circumstances, to talk of a virtuous man, in contradistinction to a vicious man, would be as absurd as to talk of a virtuous and vicious house-clock, or machines of any other kind. The whole scope of the scriptures declare, that men are moral, accountable agents, and the Deity has always treated them as such, and dealt with them accordingly, by giving them moral laws for their instruction, with the promise of rewards for obedience, and chastisements threatened for disobedience.

Would not a man be deemed a fool of the first quality, who owned a clock, and having occasion to go abroad, and be absent for some months, who would write, and leave a set of directions for it, in the following style: I command you, that during my absence, you will strike the hours regularly and distinctly; and if at any time you find you are going too fast,

screw down the knob of the pendulum by degrees, until you regulate your going perfectly; and take especial care never to suffer the weights to run down, for, by this means, you would lose time, and not know where to begin again. If such conduct would be preposterous in an human being, I ask, is it possible that any unprejudiced person can believe, that a being who charges his angels with possible folly, should act so inconsistently himself, as to give a regular code of laws to a set of animated *machines* who have no *will* of their own, but, like the horse in a mill, are obliged to move from infancy to their dissolution, in a certain track that was marked out for them, and registered in the volume of *eternal, immutable decrees*, from which they cannot deviate one inch, were it to save or prevent the universe from destruction?

PROPOSITION....*God has planed, and does execute every thing in the best manner possible.*

For, being infinitely *wise*, he must, in every possible case, perceive whatever is *best*. Being also infinitely *good*, he must of free choice wish to do the *best*. And being omnipotent, no combination of finite powers can prevent him from doing that which is *best*.

When I have expressed this sentiment, which I have frequently done, I have been asked, why, then, has he permitted the introduction of moral evil? Surely this cannot be for the *best*. To which I have replied, that moral evil has crept into the system, as an unavoidable consequence resulting from the best possible plan. For my own part, I can conceive of but three possible methods to have prevented its introduction; the first, a negative project, *id est*, to omit creating beings altogether. Secondly, to create only such beings as were perfect in knowledge, completely and immutably holy, and furnished with undeviating inclinations, and the most ample powers to fulfil every duty to God, and to all created beings. Or, thirdly, to create only a set of animated, passive machines, destitute of any intrinsic power or faculty of the mind, and devoid of every appetite and passion, which human beings now possess; and then to be entirely actuated and governed by the immediate operation of the spirit of God, in every case whatever.

Whether the second method proposed to preclude the introduction of moral evil is possibly practicable in the nature of things, or not, I leave others to determine. But I am perfectly convinced, that neither of these three modes would have been the *best*. In the first case,

the Deity would be placed in a situation similar to a most glorious, brilliant sun, stationed in empty space, wasting his rays to no useful purpose, in like manner, the innumerable blessings which are treasured up in God, as in an inexhaustible fountain, and which he delights to diffuse, would be entirely useless.

With respect to the second case, if we reason from what we know, which is our only sure guide, we will be most likely to conclude, that if an human being is not born with a perfect knowledge of every thing, both natural and moral, they must be contented to gain it progressively, and that frequently by very slow degrees, and often very imperfectly. How greatly would we be surprized to hear a new-born infant call for warm water to wash it, and a soft napkin to dry it, and tell the attendants what kind of dress it preferred; and after it was clothed, it should begin and expatiate upon its relative duties to God as its Creator, and to his fellow-beings. Supposing this to be a new order of things, and that from that very hour every person should be inspired with the same degrees of every useful knowledge; whenever the surprize occasioned by the novelty of the infant's conduct should subside, all the pleasures of social converse would be forever lost; for ev-

ery person possessing the same kind and degree of knowledge, would have nothing to learn, nor any thing new to communicate; so that when a company met, they might sit down as sociably as so many house-clocks, and click the seconds in unison together. But to compensate, in some degree, for this disadvantage, we should gain something in another way. We might make fuel of the contents of all the Bookstores and libraries, as the Turks did with the Alexandrian library, for books would be entirely useless; besides, we should have no occasion for schoolmasters and reverend divines, they also would be useless, because they could not teach us any thing which we did not know.

With respect to the third class, consisting of animated automatons, they would be as happy as apathy and indolence could make them, having neither appetites nor passions of any kind to gratify, nor any occasion to think or reflect, as every thought, word, and action, would be produced by a superior power acting within them; they would not need to puzzle their brains to discover the most eligible mode of regulating their future conduct, as they could not even guess this moment what they might be impelled to do the next.

Having stated three different projects for the exclusion of moral evil, which, for good reasons, the Deity has not adopted, as neither of them would have been the best possible, I shall now proceed to state the plan which he has adopted, and endeavour to prove it to be the *best possible*.

God has constituted every intelligent being whom he has created, a moral, accountable agent, and placed him in a state of probation, which condition as necessarily implies the possibility that the probationer may transgress the moral law, as it includes a stipulation, that he should be furnished with a degree of knowledge to enable him to distinguish between moral good and evil: a free will, unbiassed by superior influence, to choose or refuse, and powers to act agreeably to his choice. Without including all these conditions, it could not be a fair trial or state of probation. It is certain that the devil, prior to his fall, was a free, moral, accountable agent, placed in a state of probation; but as he was neither infinitely wise, nor perfectly holy, he deviated from the paths of rectitude, and fell; and as he had enjoyed greater means of improvement, and acted in a more exalted sphere than any merely human being has ever done, he became much more criminal.

When the omniscient and infinitely benevolent Jehovah contemplated the creation of the human species, he positively knew the absolute impossibility of furnishing created beings with innate or intuitive knowledge sufficient to enable them to comprehend, and sanctity enough to engage them at all times, and under all circumstances, punctually to obey, and perfectly to fulfil all the duties prescribed by the precepts of the moral law. He knew that knowledge could only be acquired by created beings by degrees, by careful tuition, attentive observation, accurate reasoning from well established, first principles, aided by long experience. He therefore created Adam and Eve as the progenitors of the human race, in a state of puberty, with a degree of knowledge exceeding that of infancy, but yet so limited for want of observation and experience, that the Deity did not mean to puzzle them with the observance of any of the intricate precepts of the moral law, but simply prohibited them from eating the fruit of one particular tree. On this single, simple condition, he constituted Adam the federal head and representative of all his posterity. But as God knew that the precepts of the moral law could not, nor should not be violated with impunity, and also that Adam being totally incapable of distinguishing between moral good and evil, would trans-

gress, by which moral evil would be introduced into the ethical system, for which Adam could not make any amends, he had previously provided for us another and more complete head and representative, perfectly competent to make ample satisfaction for the violation of the moral law, and fulfil it compleatly in our behalf; which he has done for the whole human race, and has also averted the curse of the law from every individual child of Adam. But this should not, nor does not free us from the observance of the moral law, not as the means of justification or acceptance with God, but as the rule of our conduct in life; for the best among the sons of men are daily violating its sacred precepts, through inattention and ignorance: for, notwithstanding all the opportunities of improving our knowledge, which, for many ages, we have enjoyed by tuition, observation, and experience, we appear to be as ignorant, in many respects, as our ancestors were two thousand years ago; but more particularly with reference to the designs of the Deity respecting the final condition of the human species; some believing and teaching, that God created the human race with the benevolent design to bring them *all*, finally, into a permanent state of felicity. Others believe and teach, that he has purposely rendered the whole human race sinful, to shew how much

good he could produce out of the evil which he had occasioned, and how dexterously he could extricate them out of all the difficulties into which he had brought them. And a third class, which are very numerous, believe and teach, that God has created many millions of human beings and rendered them infinitely sinful, to vindicate the apparent *justice* of rendering them eternally miserable; and contend, that the beings treated in this unjust, cruel, barbarous manner, would have no just cause to complain, because they were the sole, entire property of the being who created them! From the doctrines which inculcate such horrible opinions of the adorable Jehovah, good Lord deliver us. Amen.

THE END.

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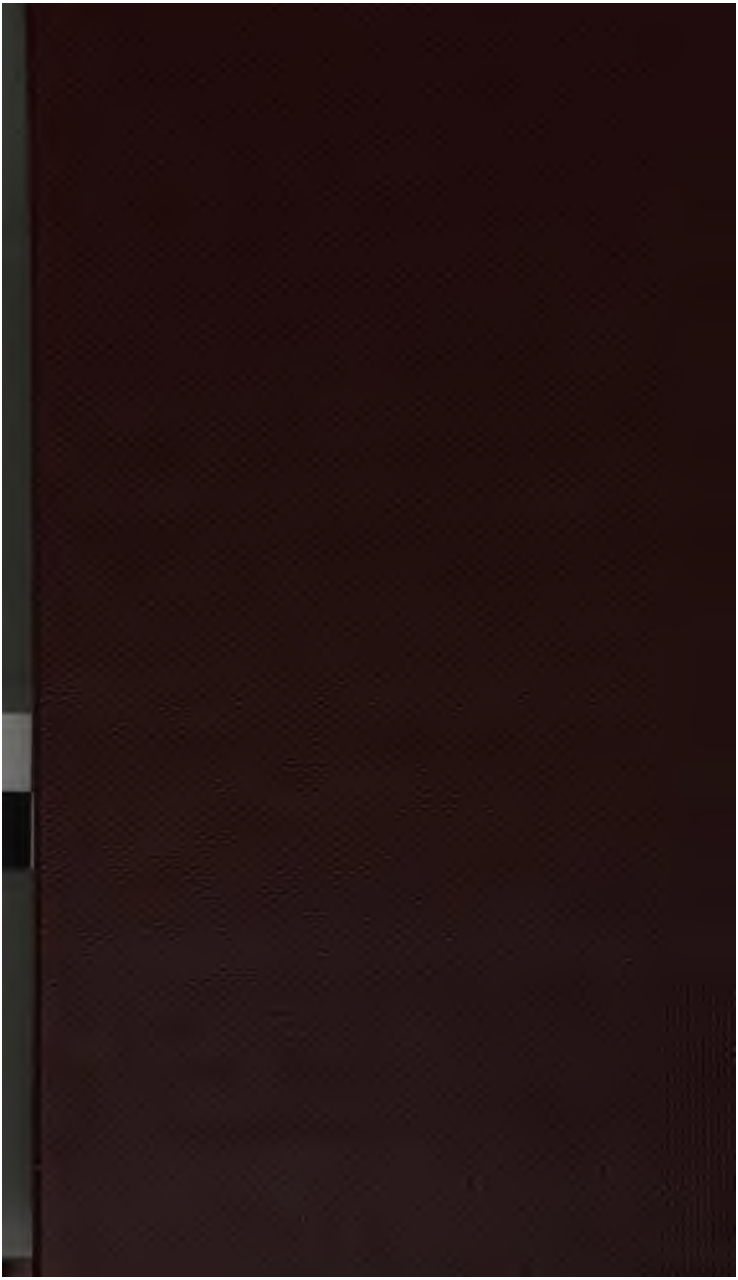
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